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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND PHILOSOPHY

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND PHILOSOPHY

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BY

FR. VINCENT McNABB, O.P.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

Part of the universal misconception concerning the Catholic Church as seen by those outside it—a misconception which dominated the non-Catholic world of the 19th Century and is only now being set right—that the one department of human activity which might have been specially pointed to as the peculiar province of Catholicism has been imagined to be not so much in conflict with Catholicism, as neglected by it. I mean philosophy.

The peculiar function of the Catholic Church in the story of our civilisation has been to preserve the philosophic conquests of pagan antiquity and to expand them over an even greater range of *discovery* than the greatest of the ancients had commanded.

There is no one acquainted with the story of Europe who does not know this to be true. Yet the story of Europe in its main outlines has been so neglected through the effect of religious conflict that even this elementary historical truth still sounds novel in many ears.

It is to be noted that the function of the Catholic Church in this respect is not connected with the truth or falsehood of her claim to be a divine

and infallible authority in matters of morals and doctrine. A man might believe the very worst of the Catholic Church as a guide and teacher of men, or might be completely indifferent to her claim, or regard it as preposterous, and yet be necessarily acquainted through history with the plain historical truth that the Church was above all a promoter of philosophy. Yet is that truth still insufficiently recognised.

Your average educated man, if he were told that the Catholic Church, the culture which it created and has hitherto maintained in Europe, had preserved the vestiges of architecture, and had caused, after centuries of conservation, a new great architecture to arise in the Middle Ages, would at once agree. He is familiar by this time with the fact that the traditions of Christendom not only saved but expanded the architecture of the ancients; preserved it and transformed it. If he were told that the culture of Christendom had done something of the same kind with letters, he would generally agree. But when he is told that what is true of letters and architecture is especially true of the prime function of philosophy, the statement is still (too often) a strange one in his ears.

We have used in this connexion the word "discovery," in connexion with philosophy. It needs a line of explanation; for the modern world has come to use the term "philosophy" to mean something very different from its true meaning. Philosophy signifies primarily the love of knowl-

edge—ultimate knowledge upon the ultimate realities; and, by extension, it especially signifies *the solving of questions which the mind puts to itself relative to the most important subjects with which the mind can deal.* Thus this word "discovery" is especially applicable to the philosophic function—the action of the mind when it succeeds in philosophical research. For instance, one of the prime questions man asks himself is whether his personality be mortal or not. The answer given to such a question is the supposed solution of a problem, and if the answer is true, it is a *discovery.* Or again, a process of reasoning which establishes the existence of a personal God is a *discovery.*

It is the discovery of a new piece of reality; the establishment of a new certitude in the place of guesswork. It is just as much discovery as is the discovery of a new district of the earth's surface —and infinitely more important.

Now because many of these questions have seemed at first sight insoluble, there has arisen, from the beginnings of philosophic discussion, a sort of imitation of philosophy which the later Greeks called "sophistry," and of which it is a fair definition to say that it is the art of making up systems which do not really solve problems and which are hardly intended to do so by their authors; which are, in a word, not discoveries, but merely guesses at the best, or at the worst a mass of verbiage. This kind of stuff, which antiquity early learned to separate from true philosophy

(which is the search for reality and the definition of it when discovered) has flourished prodigiously, especially among the Germans, from the end of the 18th Century to the latter part of the 19th; and to it most modern educated men, outside the Catholic culture, still give the term philosophy to-day.

Now philosophy is not that at all. True philosophy is to such making-up-of-systems what research in physical science is to the old *a priori* assertions of a pre-scientific age.

For example, one of the prime questions which the mind puts to itself is whether Evil be of positive existence or no. A man spinning systems may answer by mere metaphors, such as "Evil is but the shadow of Good." Or by something little more than verbiage, such as, "Evil can only exist in the relation of things to themselves"; or again, by still emptier formulae, such as that "there are no ultimate contradictions; any two apparently contradictory things may be resolved into a higher unity." But such fogs do not belong to philosophy; they belong to sophistry. The philosopher is he who shall determine by a process of reason and observation combined whether or not positive evil exists. When he arrives at a true answer in this matter, he has made a discovery. Even if he arrive at a false answer, he has acted as a philosopher; for he has made an attempt at discovery. But if he does not give a clean answer at all, but only something which makes the matter

more confused than ever, he is not a philosopher at all, but a sophist.

It is the glory of the Catholic Church to have insisted throughout her existence upon the treatment of the gravest questions in a philosophical manner, and especially to have developed since the 12th Century a vast scheme of exploration which has definitely achieved conquest upon conquest; discoveries of realities. The more the educated men of our time turn to the examination of that piece of cultural work, especially to its culminating point in St. Thomas, the more will they appreciate with how vast a matter they have to deal when they curiously approach the Faith. It is not a long time since one might say that St. Thomas was unknown outside the Catholic seminaries. Already to-day he is read even at Oxford (where not thirty years ago his name was a mere jest). In Paris to-day and in the whole university system of France there has been, as it were, a resurrection of the scholastic method. And so it should be; for men will find therein not the incomprehensible, the vague, nor the evading of questions in a mist of words, but research, discovery, and consequent rational and exact affirmation.

THE EDITOR.

INTRODUCTION

Three statements by three unquestionable authorities will fitly introduce this book.

Dr. John Burnet, Professor of Greek in the University of St. Andrews, chose for his Romanes Lecture at Oxford, May 18, 1923, the subject of "Ignorance." In the course of his lecture he said: "A pressing social problem was the growth of ignorance at the present day." ... He had no doubt that the young men of the present generation were healthier in body and mind and more intelligent; but they were absolutely and relatively more ignorant.

This plain speech to the élite of Oxford finds a re-echo in the New World. In his annual report,[1] Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, is at pains to be plain-spoken. He writes:

> Were Abelard to come back, his curiosity would certainly be excited and his sense of humour roused by much that he would see and hear in the intellectual life of the twentieth century. He might well wonder whether despite his amazing intellectual conquests made so long ago he had not lived and taught in vain.

[1] Jan., 1925.

> Having insisted again and again that the use of reason precedes faith and leads up to it, with the aid of revelation and grace, he would be confronted with the spectacle of countless numbers of men and women, all hugely pleased with the brightness of their own intellectual illumination, whose minds are blocked to the progress of reason by the barriers of prejudice and of fanatical prepossessions.
>
> To starve youth by depriving it of intellectual and moral nourishment and to cripple and disable it by depriving it of the discipline of experience are amongst the newest and most popular forms of cruelty that have been devised to make education impossible.[2]

The third and last statement seems to give the most accurate soundings of modern intellectual ignorance. It comes from C. Spearman, Grote Professor in the University of London. With a deep sense of the responsibility of his professor's chair and an explicit recognition of the meaning of his words, Professor Spearman writes:

> The reason is now evident why all search for the meaning of *intelligence* has, even with the greatest of modern psychologists, always ended in failure. It is simply that, in point of fact, *the word in its ordinary present-day usage does not possess any definite meaning.* It can be readily made to comprise, no doubt, anything that was classically applied to the word intellect. But commonly it is stretched to an undetermined distance

[2] *The Lamp*, Feb., 1925.

> further downwards. Neither its utterers nor its hearers appear to have behind it any clear idea whatever.[1]

The bankruptcy of modern philosophy has never found a more plain-spoken official receiver than is this Grote Professor of Philosophy at the University of London. If a follower of the faith had made this generalisation of modern ignorance he would have been discredited by the cry of "fanatic." But a condemnation of modern thought coming from within cannot be scared off by a taunt of fanaticism.

If these three witnesses to the spread of ignorance, especially of philosophical ignorance and even of ignorance of the very nature of intelligence, are to be believed, philosophy is dead or dying. Of course there are many even in the English-speaking countries who would unconcernedly see philosophy to its grave, provided that trade was good and the daily press was well edited. But there are others who think that imperial trade or the financial astuteness of Wall Street is not so sure of immortality as is "the glory that was Greece." The little land that begot and suckled Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle has laid all men—even all the men who follow Jesus of Nazareth—under an unredeemable debt. For the few or many of our century who would wish consciously to incur—and redeem—that debt this little book is written. Its writer will seek to

[1] *The Nature of Intelligence and the Principle of Cognition*, pp. 19, 20.

give some of his own unquenchable hope to men whom—if we may believe America and England and Scotland—the universities have filled with despair. This quest of hope under his guidance will lead them to see that the Catholic of to-day is what the Catholic Church has always been, the home of true philosophy.

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER I

THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH AND PHILOSOPHY

Nature of Philosophy

Let us begin with a definition; in other words, let us mark our area of discussion.

The strictly logical definition of philosophy is: the knowledge of things by their ultimate causes which is attainable by the natural light of reason.

But for the purposes of our present work we shall translate this logical definition into one which may find a wider audience and a readier acceptance. We shall therefore define philosophy as *organised and supreme common sense.*

By *common sense* we mean two things; both understanded of the people. First we mean "good sense," i.e., the plain view and certitude of the plain man-in-the-street. If any of the readers of this book do not know what this "good sense" is, they are plainly disqualified from reading further into its pages. Indeed they seem to qualify instead for psychological or medical treatment.

Secondly, by *common sense* we also mean "common consent." Thank heavens, the majority of mankind (i.e., "the poor," as Lacordaire used to say) who have daily less and less material goods,

still hold the bulk of the world's sound good sense. Securis judicat orbis terrarum, which we may translate, "The bulk of mankind see straight." On plain simple matters of fact any twelve men or women, and especially any twelve fathers or mothers of large families, are more likely to see straight and talk straight than any twelve professors, especially professors of psychology, for whom the word *intelligence* has ceased to have any definite meaning.[1]

By *organised common sense* we mean the ordinary facts known through the five outer senses arranged with reference to some, not accidental, but essential principle of arrangement. I beseech my readers to master the distinction between an accidental and an essential principle of arrangement or series or order. Thus books can be arranged in a library on the accidental principle of size, by placing all the small books in one place and all the large books elsewhere. We knew an energetic librarian of whom it was said: "He now feels he has arranged his library perfectly—according to colours!"

The facts provided by *common sense* can be organised by the sovereign intelligence on many accidental principles.

---

[1] M—, a world-famous conjuror, used to say that he could do all that was done by spiritualistic mediums. When it was objected that these mediums did their wonders before university audiences, he would reply, "My fellow-conjurors know that it is easier to deceive an audience of university folk than an audience of children."

Thus it may be organised, as modern so-called educational methods are being organised, for the purpose of money-making. Chairs of this or that are established in order to encourage manufactures. No wonder intelligence has ceased to have a definite meaning. But the data of common sense must be arranged on an intrinsic principle of intelligence. In other words, all the known facts of sound sense must be seen in their principles; and again these principles must be seen in the facts of sound sense.

Lastly, by adding the word *supreme* we mean to differentiate philosophy from all other sciences. Incessu patuit Dea—"She walks a goddess." Other sciences such as mathematics or geology organise some facts by proximate principles. Philosophy organises *all* facts by the highest, or supreme principles. Hence a man's philosophy is not something that he thinks, but everything that he thinks. Philosophy is not merely a unity; it is also a totality. It is all in one; and one in all.

When we have defined philosophy as *organised, supreme common sense,* we have not discredited but have further accredited common sense. If the few who think, or who think they think, find themselves in opposition to the many on plain matters of fact, it is not the many, but the few, who must mend their thinking. Philosophy's first duty is to justify mankind's intuitions. In

other words, the philosopher is not the advocate of the devil, but the guardian of the poor.

Greek Philosophy Dying

Herein lies the genius and glory of Greece. Just as the poets of Greece sang of the love of fatherland in such simple ways as to be the poets not of one country, but of mankind, so did her thinkers think. Land and water, earth and sky, daylight and darkness, stars, moon and sun were so undeniable to the men who saw Olympus and the Aegean Sea, that philosophy became at their hands not what Greeks thought about Greece, but what mankind should think about the universe and God.

This common sense raised almost to the infinite was, by its very perfection, destined to have dealing with the *Word made Flesh,* who was the Infinite stooping down to human ways of life and speech.

Even as the civil organisation of the Roman Empire gave the Catholic Church quick transit to the civilised world, so did the empire of Grecian thought become the means of reaching the mind of mankind.

Within thirty years from the death of the Son of God on the Hill of Golgatha, the Christian Church, in the person of a Roman citizen, Paul of Tarsus, was standing on the Hill of Mars at Athens discussing immortality with Stoics and Epicureans in the language of Homer and Plato!

It was not a moment too soon. Greek philosophy, which Christians look on as a divine preparation for the faith, was dying into agnosticism, the unredeemable sin of intellectual sloth. To understand the disease called agnosticism we must understand the difference between four clearly marked vital activities, viz.: *attention, understanding, assent, action.* Each of these activities implies a choice and therefore a rejection. Each of them demands an act of the intelligence commanded by the will. Without defining them, we can trust our readers to see that to attend is not of itself to understand; to understand is not to accept; and to accept is not necessarily to act or to live. Yet each of these intellectual activities can be so self-satisfying as to be an end in itself. Modern mechanical devices for passing away the time are based on the pleasure of attending without the fatigue of understanding. Understanding is of itself so great a delight that many are at no further pains to accept. And of the few who give an intellectual acceptance to practical truths, still fewer perhaps are found who realise that as speculative truths are ours only when we accept them as true, so, too, practical truths are ours only when we live them as good.

Epicureans and Stoics were alike worshippers at that tragic altar dedicated *to the unknown God.* The Stoics worshipped it with the despair of men whose will had no seconding from their

intellects. But the greater intellectual consistency of the Epicurean agnosticism came of the complete inconsistency and weakness of their wills. The Stoics affirmed the will; the Epicureans affirmed the flesh; because in sheer intellectual fatigue both were denying the intellect. For them as for the moderns whom Professor Spearman tries and condemns, "intelligence had ceased to have any definite meaning."

Coming of the Church

The Catholic Church appeared in the Agora and the Areopagus only just in time to save the supreme organised common sense of Greece. It is bewildering to see how soon and how voraciously the Church assimilated the true substance of Greek philosophy. Not only Paul of Tarsus to whom Greek was a native language, but John of Bethsaida, who probably like Simon Peter spoke the native Aramaic with a burr, boldly expressed the doctrine of the Incarnate God in terms of Greek philosophy. In introducing his essentially Hebrew Gospel to the Greek world John was careful to safeguard his doctrine of the divine Sonship of Jesus from any taint of Hellenic polytheism. Greek polytheistic mythology knew only too much of divine sons and daughters. An Eastern religion which seemed based on something akin to the amours of Olympus would have little chance of a hearing with either the Epicureans or Stoics. St. John was too well acquainted with

Greek modes of thought not to know that this divine co-eternal Son must not be taken to be the offspring of a carnal but of an intellectual begetting. A philosophical word was providentially at hand even as he wrote his Gospel. Λόγος was so essentially Greek that it is difficult to know whether it owes most to the thought of Plato or that of Aristotle. Indeed there is no more definite certainty about its exact meaning than about its exact origin. One thing alone is certain, that the word of the mind had not a carnal but only an intellectual begetting. With the instinct of a divine organism which selects its own food, St. John, the fisherman of Bethsaida, seized on the idea of intellectual begetting as if saying to his Greek readers, "These [words] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." But it is an intellectual, not a carnal begetting. For God has not a body; and His Son is a Λόγος or an eternally uttered Word. This Son is not Flesh [σραξ]. But this Word became Flesh.

* * * * *

When St. John used a characteristic Greek word to introduce his Hebrew Gospel to the non-Hebrew world, an understanding had been reached between the Church and philosophy. This understanding was still more strengthened by the spread of the Church's official books, now called the New Testament, in the language of Greece. No one should overlook the function of

a language in the spread of philosophical ideas. Even the grammar which some of us older men learned in an elementary (primary) school in Ireland was a product of such men as Aristotle and his greatest followers. It is perhaps a sign of spreading ignorance that in some countries grammar has now been taken out of the curriculum of the primary schools. Children are no longer taught to recognise certain words as nouns or substantives, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, etc. The gentlemen who are officially responsible for this educational cut seem either to be ignorant of the educational value of these parts of speech, or to be determined that children of primary schools shall have the door of culture shut in their faces. As it is unthinkable that any so-called educationalist should shut rather than open this door, it only remains to think that they are ignorant of the philosophical connexion between these parts of speech and the ten categories of Greek philosophy.[2]

Consequently, the translation and widespread circulation of the Sacred Books of the Catholic Church meant a very thorough fellowship between the Church and philosophy.

The Church's Power of Assimilation and Rejection

But the Catholic Church in this matter of

[2] I am told that of late the ill-effects of leaving out grammar are making "educationalists" bring it back with many apologies for their mistake.

philosophy showed two qualities of all healthy living beings: 1. Assimilation; 2. Rejection.

1. By its vast powers of assimilation it proved itself to be an organism of the highest type. This will be clear to those who recognise the law that "the higher the organism the wider is its area of assimilation." Lower organisms have such a specialised area of assimilation that they are fixed to one spot. Placed in another spot they find nothing they can assimilate. Death is the result.

But the highest visible organism, man, has a vast area of assimilation. He has the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms for his food. Even the highest mammals are not so catholic in what they can eat and live on as is man. If they attempted to do as man does, they would eat and die.

In intellectual and spiritual spheres the same law is observed. The highest truth has the widest area of assimilation. The present writer can recall when this principle first struck him with irresistible force. He was listening at one of our historic universities to the inaugural lecture of a Regius Professor of Divinity. The professor was a refined scholar of the modern type. His English style was classical. His speaking-voice—or rather his reading-voice, for he spoke from a manuscript—was a melodious setting for the classical phraseology. Very gently, yet very emphatically, he read the theologians a lecture on the need of keeping abreast of modern scientific discoveries.

Thelogians must not be ignorant of modern scientific development. To be true to their function they must ever adjust themselves to the findings of science. If theology did not assimilate what is as true in science, it would die.

The moral was undeniable. There was no argument for the opposite opinion.

But there was no mention of the obverse opinion. What, in irritation, I wanted to know was, "How far does science adjust itself to the findings of theology? How much theology has science assimilated?" Almost with contempt I recalled the gross ignorance of theology manifested by some of the most accredited scientists. My contempt would have hardened into a scornful speech if I had not recollected that after all it is the higher that assimilates the lower rather than *vice versa,* and that if science has shown only weak assimilative powers it is because it is not a final synthesis but only a stage towards what is final.

In contrast with this weak assimilative power of science even in the hands of the greatest scientists stands the omnivorous assimilative power of the early Church. It is no part of this argument to assume or even to prove that the Church, like its divine Founder, had a miraculous birth. But there is sound logic in the venerable epigram: "A church that spread as the Catholic Church spread, without miracles, would be the greatest of all miracles." If this is true, there are probably

few miracles more authentic than the Church's assimilation of Greek philosophy.

The miracle seems greater when we reflect that the Church sprang, not from Greece, but from the strip of land in Syria which for centuries had been little better than the shuttlecock of great warring nations. Little or nothing of Hellenic culture had entered the veins of this little group of tillers and traders. Yet from within its handful of Easterners there arose an institution which picked the intelligence of Greece and used the practical sense of Rome.

If anything could make the miracle of assimilation more striking it is the matter of heredity. Students of religious psychology might raise the question whether this assimilative power was nothing else than a matter of ancestry, a racial quality. On the contrary, the Jewish race, from which the Catholic Church came and from which it came fully organised, had low or even no powers of assimilation. Indeed it is the very glory of the Jew that he resists every attempt at assimilating, or of being assimilated. He came into contact with the highly organised culture of Egypt. After some centuries of contact he came out, a Jew. He was for almost two generations steeped in the culture of Babylon—and came back, a Jew. Greece and Rome, indeed Europe and America, have given him a welcome; but he is ever a Jew, physically and philosophically distinct.

Yet from this marvellously immovable race who took from their contemporaries little beyond the material means of life sprang an institution which assimilated Greek philosophy as if Socrates and Plato and Aristotle were brother-prophets of the Baptist in preparing for the reign of Jesus Christ.

2. This power of assimilation might easily have grown septic, if it had not been joined with the almost greater power of rejection.

Modern historical investigation is bringing to light the many modes of thought and life then to be found amidst the active dwellers on the shores of the Mediterranean.

The introduction to the Gospel of St. Luke gives us an insight into "the *many* who had taken in hand to set forth in order the things" that had been accomplished. Probably amongst the Church's feat of rejection none was so great as its rejection of the *many* gospels in favour of only four. Only less wonderful was its instinctive rejection of the many false, hastily synthesised philosophies which littered the Levant. The London, Paris or New York of to-day is but a repetition of the bewildering medley of thought into which the early Church went on its soul-saving expeditions, but went with an amazing instinct for rejection.

For example, the first authentic history of the Catholic Church, the Acts of the Apostles, records

the life and doings of St. Paul at Ephesus, the Athens of Asia Minor. For two years St. Paul "disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus." It was a daily lesson in the kinship between true faith and true philosophy. But the historian and eye-witness of these events, St. Luke, records how St. Paul had such power that even handkerchiefs that had touched him drove out evil spirits. Whereupon some Jews, perhaps like Simon Magus, for the sake of gain, endeavoured to drive out wicked spirits by invoking Jesus, the Master of St. Paul. But the spirits answered with a certain humorous rhetoric: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know—but who are you?" And the wicked spirit drove the Jews out of the house, naked and wounded. For our readers the point about this story is not that it is true or false, but that the early Christians took it to be true. In other words, the early Christians were quite certain that they had power over spirits; and this in a century like our own, that was largely spiritualistic. Yet the Catholic Church rejected spiritualism!

Again, at Lystra in Asia Minor, after St. Paul had cured a cripple, the pagan crowd "lifted up their voice in the Lycaonian tongue, saying, "the gods are come down to us in the likeness of men: And they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercury. The priests also of Jupiter bringing oxen and garlands would have offered sacrifice with the people" (Acts xiv. 12-15). But St. Barnabas and

St. Paul disowned the worship with very emphatic language. For our readers the point of this story is not that it is true or false, but that the early Christians took it to be true. In other words, the early Christians were quite certain that they had power over bodily defects and disease. They were confronted, as to-day the Christian bodies are confronted, by a temptation to become Christian Scientists; yet the Catholic Church rejected Christian Science.

The miraculous nature of this assimilation and rejection which distilled a few precious drops of philosophical truth from a flood of philosophical error is confirmed by a modern summary:

> The after-relations of Christian faith to Greek forms of thought have been made the subject of close and prolonged investigation by the modern school of historical criticism of which Harnack is the great representative, and of which Hatch and McGiffert are leading English examples. The work of this school is of priceless value in respect of its pure historical research. But in so far as it is dominated by certain presuppositions, and is determined by a certain preconceived idea, it seems to be mistaken in its results.
>
> That "*dogma is in its conception and development a product of the Greek spirit on the soil of the Gospel*[3] may in a sense be admitted. In the Hibbert lecture of Dr. Hatch the problem as conceived by these writers is expressed with a clearness which leaves nothing to be desired, viz.:

Why an ethical sermon stood in the forefront of the teaching of Jesus, and a metaphysical creed in the forefront of the Christianity of the fourth century? The conclusion is that the change being *coincident with the transference of Christianity from a Semitic to a Greek soil is the result of Greek influence.*

In plain words primitive Christianity was simple ethical teaching regarding God and duty[4] undisturbed by intellectual problems and absolutely free from speculative elements. Theology, as imbedded in the great Creeds, is a superstructure of mischievous metaphysic reared by the fruitless subtlety of the Greek intellect, which must be swept away before genuine Christianity can be revealed in pristine beauty and power.[5]

Here, as heretofore, for our readers the point is not whether this Greek philosophy which the Church chose to assimilate from amongst a hundred rejected systems was true or false; but the point is that the Church assimilated Greek philosophy.

Harnack's distaste for metaphysic is a strange quality for one who is consciously or unconsciously a child of Kant's *a priori* forms of thinking. It is not our place to point out the inconsistencies of this view of what is (wrongly) called the modern school of historical criticism. The sharp distinc-

[4] That is, the simple ethical teaching which Harnack and others accepted. Its highest modern expression was Harnack's once famous now almost forgotten book, *What is Christianity?*

[5] Prof. T. B. Kilpatrick, *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. "Philosophy," vol. iii, 852, 3.

tion between "a simple ethical teaching" and mischievous metaphysic can be accepted by those who have not the time or mind to look into the matter. Metaphysics, as the word indicates, is a science of things beyond and above the physical order. But surely even a modern historian would admit that ethics, being as it is concerned with the moral order, is therefore a science of things beyond the physical order.

Moreover, is the simple ethical teaching of the Sermon on the Mount devoid of all supra-physical ideas and sanctions? Are such sentiments as the following mere statements of physical measures and sequences?

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Is spirit physical? Is heaven marked on any atlas?

"Blessed are the meek; for they shall possess the land." Is meekness a property of matter? Is the land Russia or England, etc.?

"Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you. . . . Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven." Is this reviling and persecution a physical sequence? a mechanical movement? a chemical reaction? And is this reward some physical addition or multiplication—some increase in bulk or rise in temperature, etc.?

The truth is that nothing is more metaphysical than this so-called simple ethical teaching. If our readers doubt of this let them spend an hour or two reading this "simple ethical teaching" of the

Sermon on the Mount, for the purpose of finding all the ultra-physical assumptions that are its motive-power. But we shall have more to say of the strange mistake made by these modern critics when dealing with the simple ethical teaching.

Doctrines Assimilated

A mere enumeration of the doctrines of Greek philosophy assimilated by the early Church will include almost all the ultimate principles of thought and action accepted by that excellent judge, the average man or the average woman, the man-about-the-street or the woman-about-the-home.

1. *The existence of an external world.* The doctrine was threatened by heresies holding that the body of Jesus Christ looked real but was not real.

2. *The validity of our external senses which apprehend the external world.* These senses were looked upon, not as omniscient, but as infallible. Their range was limited, but within that range they were infallible. They did not see all or altogether, but they saw right.

3. *The validity of our intellectual processes.* Over and above the bodily senses there are spiritual powers of apprehending, weighing, valuing, developing the data furnished by the senses. Man is not only a seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching animal; he is also a thinking, judging, reasoning, mistake-making and truth-loving ani-

mal. These (2, 3) two great philosophical principles of Greek philosophy were implicitly denied by the heresies which denied the others (1 and 2).

4. *The principle of causality.* This was implicitly denied by the heresies in denying that the world had an intelligent Creator, or still more subtly by those who said there were two Creators,—a Creator of Good and a Creator of Evil. The Church's firm hold on the goodness of the Flesh and Blood of Jesus withstood the errors.

5. *The principle of free-will.* This principle, so necessary for a right understanding of (4) was threatened in innumerable ways; and therefore countered by innumerable decisions. The whole doctrine of the Incarnation as Redemption was an invincible defence of the doctrine of man's sinfulness and therefore of man's freedom.

6. *The existence of spiritual, immaterial beings.* This was but a necessary conclusion of reason, which borrowed from and lent weight to the foregoing principles. On these principles rested—

7. *The doctrine of personality.* If anything could be considered a European and Greek philosophical principle, it was that of personality. All the major heresies which the Catholic Church withstood were based on some error about personality. But the soundest Greek thought on this problem of psychology was used by the Church without stint. Few phenomena in the history of human culture are more significant and indeed mysterious than the part played by the Greek lan-

guage in the expression of the Church's faith in the Blessed Trinity and in the Incarnation.

These two fundamental doctrines expressed in simple Greek word ὁμοούσιος (consubstantial) and θεοτόκος (God-bearing), are not only understood without being comprehended by simple people, but even the grammatical phrasing of the doctrines was in a Greek which has long since become a dead language. No other language, with the possible exception of scholastic Latin, was so fitted for the unambiguous formulation of truths. When once a truth had received such a formulation in the exact scientific language of Plato's *Republic and* Aristotle's *Ethics,* there could be further discussion about the nature and qualities of the truth, but there could be no further discussion about the meaning of the Greek formulation.

It is then a matter of reverent wonder and satisfaction that the fundamental doctrines of the Catholic Church, the Trinity and the Incarnation, have been formulated in the unambiguous language of Greece. No small gain has come to the Church from the providential fact that the first eight General Councils which have transmitted unto all ages these fundamental doctrines were essentially Greek in personnel and language.

No less providential does it seem that this Greek soon became a dead language. A living language of a living people is no fit medium for transmitting exact formulae. Indeed it is no paradox to

say that if exact formulae on the highest truth are to be kept alive they must be committed not to a living but to a dead language.

8. *The principle of substance and accidents.* Strange as it may seem, the principle of personality so insisted upon against the Arians, Nestorians, and Eutycheans, led to the confirmation of the commonly accepted distinction between substance and accidents.

Personality in its fulness was self-conscious permanent unity. But this self-conscious permanent unity was conscious of transient qualities which the thinkers named accidents. John sitting was not substantially different from John standing. Indeed a homely proverb spoke of "appealing from John drunk to John sober." In either case the person or substance remained the same; only one of the accidents of John was changed. This profoundly simple doctrine even John sober could understand.

Great doctrines like the permanence or immortality of the human being and the Eucharistic transubstantiation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, confirmed this principle of substance and accident. Moreover, these doctrines were quite easily understood by the simple folk, for the reason that the philosophy behind these doctrines was only sublimated good sense.

9. *The principle of the goodness of material beings and indeed of all being.* This was perhaps

one of the more subtle and least explicit principles of the sound sense of mankind in general. Not a few philosophies of pessimism and sensualism tended to throw the blame of moral evil on the material evil of the external world. We have not yet gauged the effect of the sacramental teaching in staunching this error of an evil material world. Not only did all the sacraments from Baptism to Extreme Unction look on the human body as something so naturally good as to be patient of supernatural hallowing; but even the natural elements and lower forms of life were used as channels of a supernatural life. A list of these simple material things consecrated by the Church's sacramental system would be as homely as an inventory of household goods—bread, wine, water, salt, oil, balsam, incense, candles, linen, silver, gold, a ring. The poor of the city slum, the unlettered tiller of the soil, could learn from Alma Mater Ecclesia—Dear Mother Church—that the elements or forces of nature were not in themselves evil, nor were they made by a principle of evil. They could indeed be put to an evil use. But they could more easily be put to a good use; and through the merits of His divine Son, God has endowed them with the power of conferring the goodness of a divine life. Thus a man could misuse wine and become like a beast. But he could use wine and become like God.

10. *Lastly, the principle of the brotherhood*

and equality of man, "All men are by nature equal." [6]

This principle, which has not yet reached, if it ever will reach on earth, its fullest application, may well be looked on as the Christian complement of the highest Grecian social philosophy. What Plato and Aristotle discerned as an idea, the Catholic Church proclaimed as a reality. Not that it was very explicitly proclaimed to an age which rested its social fabric on a base of slavery. But it was implicitly yet emphatically proclaimed in almost every dogma of faith or canon of discipline authorised by the Church. The doctrine of Incarnation, especially in its aspect of Redemption was, in effect, the first declaration of the equal rights of man; because it was a declaration of man's equal sin.

Such are some, although manifestly not all, of the principles of philosophy which were welcomed, and indeed welcomed home, by the Catholic Church. Any one of them would have been vital enough to beget a sect or a heresy. Yet the Catholic Church welcomed not merely one of these principles, but all of them. It seemed as though before the Son of God was born at Bethlehem He had sent his forerunners to prepare a philosophy and indeed a philosophical language to enshrine His teaching. When that teaching was made

[6] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* Pars 2ª, 2ªe, Qu. 104, Art. 5. "Omnes homines natura sunt pares." (N.B. All quotations from the *Summa Theologica* are taken from the English translation.)

known it was found to make its own the substance of all true cosmology, metaphysics, psychology, and ethics, more than a philosophy.

But it used all that was true and best in philosophy as a sovereign might use his subjects. Hereupon we touch a subtle and profound principle of St. Thomas Aquinas, that a man has authority over free men, not by directing them to his own use, but "by directing them either towards their own proper welfare or towards the common good." [1]

The use to which philosophy has been put by the theology of the Catholic Church has been not only the life but the ennoblement of philosophy. *Servire Deo regnare est.* To serve God is to reign. Philosophy came into its own, only when it came into the Catholic Church.

[1] *Summa Theologica*, Pars 1, Qu. 96, Art. 4.

CHAPTER II

THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH AND PHILOSOPHY

Aquinas on Reason and Faith

The essence of the medieval Church's attitude towards philosophy may perhaps be best formulated in an article from the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas. In its terse, brief statement it has the dramatic quality of the short story. Our readers need not be reminded that this Angel of the Schools always begins by setting out the arguments of the other side. For the words "reason, reasons," substitute the word philosophy.

Whether Reasons in Support of What We Believe Lessen the Merit of Faith.[1]

1. It seems that reasons in support of what we believe lessen the merit of faith. For Gregory says [Hom. 26 in Ev.] that "there is no merit in believing what is shown by reason." If therefore any human reason provides sufficient proof the merit of faith is altogether taken away; therefore it seems that any kind of human reasoning in support of matters of faith diminishes the merit of believing.

2. Further, whatever lessens the measure of virtue lessens the amount of merit, since *happiness*

[1] *Summa Theologica*, Pars 2ª, 2ªe, Qu. 2, Art. 10.

is the reward of virtue as the Philosopher states [*Ethic.* 1]. Now human reasoning seems to diminish the measure of the virtue of faith, since it is essential to faith to be about the unseen. Now the more a thing is supported by human reasons the less is it unseen. Therefore human reasons in support of matters of faith diminish the merit of faith.

3. Further, contrary things have contrary causes. Now an inducement in opposition to faith increases the merit of faith—whether it consists in persecution inflicted by one who endeavours to force a man to renounce his faith, or in an argument persuading him to do so. Therefore reasons in support of faith diminish the merit of faith.

On the contrary: It is written [I Pet. iii. 15]: *Being ready always to satisfy everyone that asketh you a reason of that faith and hope which is in you.* Now the Apostle would not give this advice if it would imply a diminution in the merit of faith. Therefore reason does not diminish the merit of faith.

I answer that: As stated above, the act of faith can be meritorious, in so far as it is subject to the will, not only as to the use but also as to the assent.

Now human reason in support of what we believe may stand in a twofold relation to the will of the believer. First, as preceding the act of the will; as for instance, when a man either has not the will, or not a prompt will to believe, unless he be moved by human reasons. And in this way human reason diminishes the merit of faith. In this sense it has been said that in moral virtues

a passion which precedes choice makes the virtuous act less praiseworthy. For just as a man ought to perform acts of moral virtue on account of the judgment of his reason, and not on account of his passion, so ought he to believe matters of faith, not on account of human reason, but on account of Divine authority.

Secondly, human reason may be consequent to the will of the believer. For when a man's will is ready to believe, he loves the truth he believes; he thinks out and takes to heart whatever reasons he can find in support thereof. And in this way human reason does not exclude the merit of faith; but is a sign of greater merit. Thus again in moral virtues a consequent passion is the sign of a more prompt will. We have an indication of this in the words of the Samaritans to the woman, who is a type of human reason: *We now believe, not for thy saying*" [Jo. iv. 42].

Reply 1. Gregory is referring to the case of a man who has no will to believe what is of faith, unless he be induced by reasons. But when a man has the will to believe what is of faith, on the authority of God alone, although he may have reasons in demonstration of some of them e.g., of the existence of God, the merit of faith is not for that reason, lost or diminished.

Reply 2. The reasons which are brought forward in support of the authority of faith are not demonstrations which can bring intellectual vision to the human intellect; wherefore they do not cease to be unseen. But they remove obstacles to faith; by showing that what faith proposes is not

impossible; wherefore such reasons do not diminish the merit or the measure of faith.

On the other hand, though demonstrative reasons in support of the preambles of faith, but not of the articles of faith, diminish the measure of faith, since they make the thing believed to be seen, yet they do not diminish the measure of charity which makes the will ready to believe them even if they were unseen. And so the measure of merit is not diminished.

Reply 3. Whatever is in opposition to faith, whether it consists in man's thoughts, or in outward persecution, increases the merit of faith in so far as the will is shown to be more prompt and firm in believing. Hence the martyrs had more merit of faith through not renouncing faith on account of persecution. And even the wise have greater merit of faith through not renouncing their faith on account of the reasons brought forward by philosophers or heretics in opposition to faith.

On the other hand, things that are favorable to faith do not always diminish the promptness of the will to believe; and therefore they do not always diminish the merit of faith.

The date of this is about A.D. 1273.

The Greeks and the Medievalists

It will be confessed that this style of writing is as novel and unmistakable as a Gothic cathedral. Just as prehistoric man and the builders of the Parthenon had laid one stone on another, yet Stonehenge is not the Parthenon, so had the Greeks and the medievals put thoughts together,

yet the *Nicomachean Ethics* is not the *Summa Theologica.*

However, since the time of Aristotle no man has approached the writer of the *Summa* in Aristotle's power of using the minimum of words to express the fullest and most exact meaning. Even the mere man of letters whose instinct is for the colour rather than the lines and shape of truth, will agree that St. Thomas has dealt magnanimously with his readers, by offering them, not sentiment or rhetoric, but truth. It was the greatness of Plato to discern and proclaim that the poets warped the mind for philosophy. But it was for the greatness of Plato's follower Aristotle to take away the last shreds of poetic exaggeration from the rhetoric of his master. This austere devotion of Aristotle to truth was of singular power over Aquinas. Although not a few of Plato's noble intuitions, overlooked or set aside by Aristotle, were resumed by Aquinas, yet the austere truthfulness of Aristotle's literary style was the unfailing guide of every line Aquinas penned.

Nevertheless, no Catholic of the medieval Church, no contemporary of Salisbury and Notre Dame cathedrals, and especially no medieval Catholic genius could be a servile copyist of Greek philosophical genius. In every line of the passage we have quoted originality is dominant. The main divisions of the article in I, "Objections"; II, "Body of Doctrine"; III, "Reply to Objections," is almost a treatise on Christian charity. There is no

little of the chivalry of the jousting-ring and the battle-field in asking the enemy to begin the dispute. It reminds one of the opening story of the Battle of Fontenoy. A French ensign and an English ensign rode out and met between the armies, saluted, and when the English ensign said: "Messieurs les Français, tirez les premiers," the French ensign replied: "Messieurs les Anglais, tirez les premiers!" Aquinas, with the blood of emperors in his veins, and the thought of Greek genius in his mind, viewed a discussion as a battle between true soldiers, wherein the final victory of truth should not be endangered by impatience or untruth.

Greek Philosophy and Islam

This new wedlock of Grecian philosophy and Catholic faith is separated from the old by almost a thousand years of life and thought. The story of this wedlock has been called by a recent writer "the most romantic history of culture drift known to us in detail." [2]

If Grecian philosophy could be personified we could tell this romantic history as a story of how Hellas, betrothed to Christ by the great decisions of the General Councils, tried vainly to find a life-mate elsewhere than in the Catholic Church.

After the Council of Ephesus had asserted, against Nestorians, that Jesus Christ was not two

[2] De Lacy O'Leary, *Arabic Thought and Its Place in History*, p. 295.

persons but one divine Person, Nestorianism withdrew eastward, carrying with it traditions of the great school of Antioch which had been its nursing mother. A short halt was made at the school of Edessa. But Zeno the Byzantine by closing this school (A.D. 439) drove the Nestorians under Barsuma to cross the frontier into Persia. It was an historic exodus which is influencing not merely the East but the West as well, even to our own day.

With the passage of the Nestorian school and its Greek philosophical culture into Persia, Hellas may be said to begin the wooing of Zoroastrianism. But whilst it meant a definite breach with both the Nestorian and Monophysite alliance, it did not succeed in being a lasting alliance even with Zoroastrianism. Soon the Moslem surge by overwhelming Mesopotamia, and finally Persia, effectively turned Hellas from the followers of Zoroaster to the followers of Mohammed (see below).

It was the first time in history that the children of Mohammed had come into vital contact with Hellas speaking a language which they could understand. Gradually Greek culture had been translated in Persia and elsewhere into Arabic, often direct from Greek originals; but often again from Syriac translations. "The whole of the logical *Organon* of Aristotle was accessible in Arabic, and in this were included the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* as well as Porphyry's *Isagoge*. They had the *Physic De Coelo, De Generatione et Corruptione, De*

Sensu, the *Historia Animalium*, and the *De Anima*. On mental and moral science, they had the *Metaphysics*, the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Magna Moralia*. The *Politics* was not included, its place being taken by Plato's *Laws* or *Republic*.[8]

No patient student of the rise of Mohammedanism could foresee a lasting wedlock between Hellas and the Koran. It was said in a proverb quoted by Lord Bacon: "Where Ottoman's horse sets his foot men will come up very thin"; and scholars will "come up still thinner." Even the long traditions of Persian scholarship when it became Mohammedan could not make a lasting wedlock. Eastern Islam in producing such philosophers as Alkendi, Alfarabi, Avicenna and Algazel demonstrated that, in its native lands, Islam could not assimilate either the speech or thought of Greece.

There was a chance, if not a likelihood, that what the East could not do might be done in the freer air of the West. The Moslems of Spain, largely recruited from the refugees whom orthodox Islams had driven from the East, might have been expected to make a home within their cult for the larger culture of Greece.

But it was soon seen that the failure of Eastern Mohammedanism was not due to its being Eastern, but to its being Mohammedan. Where East failed under certain external difficulties, West also failed without these external difficulties. The chief diffi-

[8] Ibid., pp. 117, 118.

culty was not external but internal. What was wrong with Islam was that it was Islam.

Against this internal enmity to philosophical culture even the genius of thinkers like Avempace, Abubacer, and Averroës proved unavailing. A competent historian has provided us with a sufficient summary of the attempt and failure to wed Mohammedanism and Greek culture:

> When the Aristotelian philosophy was first known to the Muslim world it was received almost as a revelation supplementing the Qur'an. At that time it was very imperfectly understood and the discrepancies between it and orthodox theology were not perceived. Thus the Qur'an and Aristotle were read together and regarded as supplementing one another in perfect good faith; but inevitably the conclusions and still more the methods of Greek philosophy began to act as a powerful solvent on the traditional beliefs.[4]
>
> Alfarabi [d. A.D. 950] was *"the greatest philosopher that the Muslims ever had . . . and it was by the study of his writings and the imitation of his style that Avicenna attained proficiency and rendered his own work so useful.* Ibn Khallikan iii. 307. He appears throughout as a devout Muslim, and evidently does not appreciate the bearing of the Aristotelian psychology on the doctrine of the Qu'ran. . . . He did not see where the Aristotelian teaching would lead him; to him Aristotle seemed orthodox because his doctrines seemed to prove the immortality of the soul. . . .

[4] Ibid., p. 123.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Alfarabi. Practically all we afterwards meet in Avicenna and Averröes is already to be found in substance in his teaching; only that these later philosophers have realized that the Aristotelian system cannot be reconciled with the traditional theology. And so, having given up all attempt at formal reconciliation, they are able to express themselves more clearly and to press home their tenets to their logical conclusions.[5]

. . . the later errors of Mu'tazilites showed what extremely dangerous errors could be drawn by those who came under Hellenistic influence; and the more accurately the Greek philosophers were studied the worse the heresies gathered from them.[6]

Avicenna never perceived the importance of reading Aristotle in the original. He had no knowledge of Greek, and gives no sign of supposing that a study of the Greek text would at all assist a student of the philosopher. The method of his commentaries is the time-honoured form derived from the Syriac commentators.[7]

Averröes ends the illustrious line of Arabic Aristotelians. A few Aristotelian scholars followed in Spain; but with the decay of the Muwahhid power these came to an end. . . . In modern Islam there is no Aristotelian scholarship, save only in logic: where Aristotle has always held his own.[8]

[5] Ibid., pp. 143-156.
[6] Ibid., pp. 209.
[7] Ibid., p. 256.
[8] Ibid., p. 260.

Thus failed the attempt to bring a lasting wedlock between Islam and Greek culture. The hoof of Mohammed's horse had been set down; and philosophers came up thin!

Greek Philosophy and Jewry

But the undaunted Hellas, in her search for a permanent union, turned from Islam to Jewry; not indeed the Jewry of the national home in Palestine or of the East, but the Western Jewry that hung about the camp of Christianity and of Islam in the West.

And indeed when Avicenna, the last of the Arabic philosophers, died in exile for heresy in A.D. 1198, the Catholic Church everywhere, except in Great Britain and Ireland, was little more than a beleaguered camp. Other writers will show our readers how the siege of Christianity and Western culture was raised by the victory of Simon de Montfort at Muret, A.D. 1213.

Islam's raid into the rich civilisation of the Roman Empire had given it sudden wealth. It was not strange that under these circumstances it behaved like the normal *nouveau riche*. It sought a rapid veneer or varnish of culture, which remained on the surface for a time, but soon wore off.

As the Latin culture of the Empire was practically identical with the Catholic Church, Islam's chief strategic duty was to meet the Latins with the sword of culture. But as we have seen, this sword, too heavy or too delicate for Islam, soon

dropped powerless from its hand. Islam's hand was more fitted for a sword of steel than for a sword of philosophy.

For a brief moment what Islam found beyond the power even of its best intelligence was attempted by Islam's camp-followers, the Jews. Men like Moses Maimonides (d. A.D. 1204) had genius enough to create, if that were possible, a school of philosophy within the faith of Jewry. That they failed to create such a school is almost a proof that it was impossible.

In more ways than one they followed their Arabic forbears in matters of philosophy. Although a Jewish proverb says of Moses Maimonides, "From Moses to Moses there is no one like Moses," yet this highest crest of Jewish thought was himself little more than a faithful follower and commentator of the Moslem Averroës. With him may be said to end the effort Hellas had made to woo and wed the two great religious institutions which, with the Catholic Church, held the allegiance of Europe and the Middle East. The result of these matrimonial embassies was that Hellas was still unwed!

Greek Philosophy and the Medieval Church

But Greek philosophy was soon to find a lifemate with the third of these great religious religions; and to find it through her unsuccessful wooing of the other two. Humanly speaking, if

there had been no Arabic and no Jewish philosophical movement, the Scholasticism of the Catholic Church would never have been born. Catholics are agreed that their philosophy was a reaction or resistance on the plain of culture to the formidable attack made by the intelligence of Islam and Israel. But it was not merely a reaction or a defence; it was a most courteously and gratefully acknowledged acceptance of what was good and true in the philosophic activities of Islam and Israel.

Something of the romantic nature of this defence by assimilation may be gathered from an incident in the life of the Spaniard whom modern scholarship is beginning to recognise as the most significant and influential figure in the intellectual renascence of the thirteenth century, Dominic Guzman, better known as St. Dominic, who, by planning and begetting an Order which quite naturally begot thinkers like Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas, has claims which no scholarship can now ignore.

At the official enquiry for his canonisation (A.D. 1233), Friar William of Montferrat deposed on oath, saying that "he went to Paris [recommended by three letters of Pope Honorius III] to hear theology because he had promised and agreed with him[9] that, first of all, he would hear theology for two years, and then after he had settled the Order [of Friar Preachers] they would both go together

[9] That is, Dominic.

to convert the Pagans who dwelt in Persia and the other countries to the North."

No great leader of the thirteenth century had been born and brought up so near the centre of the intellectual struggle as Dominic, whose birthplace was the hamlet—one might almost say the blockhouse—Calaruega in old Castile, A.D. 1170. At Palencia, where he studied in his teens, the Arabic philosopher Averroës [d. 1198] and the Jewish disciple Maimonides [d. 1204] were names which no Spanish student could fail to hear. A Guzman had too much of the Crusader spirit in his blood not to give his priestly learning an apostolic outlook. His career in the South of France had introduced him not only to the cultured paganism of the Albigenses but to flourishing groups of Jews who had been driven from Spain by the persecuting Mohammedanism of the Muwahhids.

Dominic Guzman was too deep a student of the nature and causes of contemporary movements not to see that though the fighting-line was in the Southwest of Europe the enemy headquarter was or had been in Persia; or in what his thirteenth-century geography called the North Country. That dream, which the elder Castilian unfolded to the younger, begat the strongest intellectual movement of the Middle Ages; perhaps of any age. Not only Albert and Aquinas, but even Roger Bacon, Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, are its lawful issue. Indeed, as Dominic Guzman has been

called the first Minister of Education of Europe, we might almost say that the universities wherein Europe crusaded for the truth were but the realisation of Dominic's dream to save Persia by the sound philosophy of Paris!

Humbert of Romans on Philosophy

Let us deal with a notable expression of the Dominican dream.

Humbert of Romans was the successor of St. Dominic as Master-General of the Friar Preachers from A.D. 1254 to 1263. He had spent years of study at Paris, where he and his teacher of theology, Hugh of St. Cher (later on, Cardinal), took the black and white habit of the Friar Preachers.

After his resignation from the headship of the Friar Preachers in 1263 he wrote an Exposition of the Constitution (of the Friar Preachers). In it he moves and answers the question: "Whether we can study philosophy." But his own words even in a translation are of value to the student of the relationship between the Catholic Church and philosophy.

> But again from what is here said about our duty of studying for the good of souls, it would seem that the friars ought not to study philosophical matters, which are of small profit to souls, but only the Scriptures which profit for the building up of faith and morals, or serve to give good counsel and the like.
>
> I reply: Many are attacking or will attack the Catholic Faith through philosophy. Where-

fore it is expedient to know some of the opinions of philosophers, in order the better to defend the faith; even as it is well to know heresies for the same reason.

Again: Many errors in them and in others can be refuted by certain truths of theirs.

Again: There are many things in the divine books, as in Job, and in many others and in the glosses, and in the writings of holy men, which cannot be understood without philosophical sciences.

Again: By these sciences a man's mind is sharpened to understand divine things the better.

Again: There are many things of theirs which serve well to confirm faith and Christian truth.

Again: Many people are more moved to good by things from these sciences, than from those that are in the divine Scriptures.

Again: Many people are despised at times by others, because they are ignorant of them.

Again: Many people who do not know them value them more highly before than after they know them; so that by knowledge they look down on them and prefer divine science to philosophical sciences.[10]

* * * * *

To set the true value on this straightforward and, withal, scholarly justification of philosophy, we must remember who and what is the writer. This Humbert of Romans is not merely a friend

[10] *Expositio in Constitutiones Fratrum Praedicatorum.* Ed. Berthier (Rome, 1889), pp. 42, 43.

and supporter of Thomas Aquinas; he is also the Superior-in-chief of one of the new mendicant Orders. In other words, he is, or has been till lately, the leader of what modern historians like Harnack look upon as the most potent mystical movement the Church had or has seen.

Now amongst the Moslems as amongst the Jews it was the followers of mystical communities that countered and finally deadened the men who ventured upon philosophy. Moslem and Jewish mystics banned Moslem and Jewish philosophy. Catholic mystics were not merely tolerant of but even eager for Greek philosophy!

Herein lies a main and manifest difference between philosophy as it fared with the Catholic Church and as it fared elsewhere with Islam or Israel. Moslems and Jews of great intelligence like Averroës or Maïmonides were found to be conversant with Greek philosophy. But they were not Moslems or Jews of official position. Even although Islam has no official, or rather, sacrificial priesthood like the Jews and Christians, yet the great Moslem philosophers did not belong to such an official class as they have. All, or almost all, of their philosophers, were laymen; many of them were court physicians.

So, too, with the Jewish philosophers. These were not to be found among the Jewish priests, but amongst the Jewish layfolk. Indeed the Jew-

ish priestly class was largely responsible for finally breaking off the attempted wedlock between Greek philosophy and Jewry.

In strong contrast with this phenomenon of Islam and Israel is the welcome given to philosophy by all that was official and priestly in the Catholic Church. Men like Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine are not to be paralleled amongst the Moslems and Jews. They belong to the official and indeed to the highest official class. Chrysostom is a patriarch of Constantinople; Augustine is a Bishop of Northern Africa. Nor is their genius beneath their official character. They stand amongst the foremost ranks of human genius.

The same alliance between philosophy and the Catholic official priesthood is no less visible in the medieval Church than in the Church of the Fathers. Lanfranc, Anselm, Edmund Rich, Kilwardby, Peckham, were successors of Theodore of Tarsus in the See of Canterbury, giving that See a literary tradition perhaps unsurpassed in the Catholic Church. Peter Lombard was Bishop of Paris, Albert the Great was Bishop of Ratisbon, Pullen and Bonaventure were Cardinals. So greatly did the medieval Church foster philosophy that a danger lay in men's taking up philosophy as a highway to ecclesiastical preferment. It is sometimes looked upon as one of the greatest miracles of St. Thomas Aquinas that he died a simple friar—and not a Cardinal.

Two Incidents in the Life of St. Anselm

Two incidents in the life of St. Anselm will throw light on the relationship between these representative Catholic ecclesiastics and philosophy. When Anselm was sixty-two years old the fury of William Rufus drove him from Canterbury to Italy. After a short stay with Urban II in Rome, he went on to the little town of Schiavi not far from Naples. There he spent his quiet days, not in regretting his princely surroundings as "Pope of the Further World" at Canterbury, but in composing the famous treatise, *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God Man).

The same unquenched thirst for philosophical truth did not leave him even when in his seventy-sixth year the scholar lay dying in his palace at Canterbury. On Palm Sunday, only three days before his death, one of those who sat around him said: "Lord Father, it is given to us to understand that, quitting this world, you will keep the Easter Court of your Lord." To which he answered: "Certainly, if this is His will, I will do His will gladly. *Yet I should be grateful if he would rather I stayed in your midst long enough to resolve the question I have in my mind about the origin of the soul.* For I do not know who would resolve it when I am dead. If I could only eat I hope I should get well, since I feel no pain anywhere in my body except a weakness of the stomach, and therefore for lack of food which I cannot take, I am wholly weakened." [11]

[11] *Vita*, Eadmer, P.L.M. clviii, 115.

Plato's dream of philosopher-kings was perhaps realised better than he expected in this quiet scholar, who would have been grateful if God had given him a little longer than three score years and sixteen in order to supplement Aristotle's treatise on the nature and faculties of the soul by a treatise on the origin of the soul! It was the same alert and many-sided mind which, perhaps by the neighbourhood of Naples, the almost oriental city of Moors and Jews, used his leisure at Schiavi to answer Moorish and Jewish difficulties by his *Cur Deus Homo*. Moreover, it was the same fearless student who, again and again, withstood the rage of William Rufus with such calm that, once at a fiery discussion in the royal castle at Rockingham, when death was within sight, he awaited the result of the royal council by leaning his head against the church wall and going to sleep.[22]

These simple significant anecdotes of a Lombard scholar who became Abbot of a Norman Monastery, and died Archbishop of Canterbury, are but a symbol of the historical fact that when philosophy came to the Catholic Church it was unto a lawful, lasting wedlock. The Church took it to itself, offered it as something covetable to its highest geniuses and saints, and was rewarded by finding that it left unmarred their genius and sanctity, even adding to what was best in their mind and soul a certain childlike simplicity which is the final achievement of the highest science and culture.

[22] Ibid., p. 383.

Analysis of Extract from Aquinas

Perhaps there is more than geography in the fact that Schiavi, where Anselm countered Islam and Jewry with his immortal *Cur Deus Homo*, is neighbour to Rocca Secca, where Aquinas was born. Indeed the question, "Why is God man?" which Anselm put and answered when in exile at Schiavi is neighbour to the question, "What is God?" which the boy Aquinas used to ask his Benedictine teachers in the cloisters at Monte Casino. The young Neapolitan thinker is by all the laws of intellectual heredity the legitimate offspring of the Lombard thinker. Aquinas is Anselm born again; and born greater than before.

Hence if our necessarily rapid study of the Church and Philosophy becomes largely a study of Aquinas and the Greeks, it is not merely because our book has its limits, but still more because a great fact may be best studied in its greatest factor. Now by common agreement of the historians of philosophy no thinker since the time of Plato and Aristotle has outrun or even reached Aquinas' understanding of Plato and Aristotle. For Aquinas these masters of Hellas are the supreme captains of thought. Aristotle is simply *the philosopher*.

Moreover, not only do the scholars acknowledge Aquinas the most accomplished master of Greek thought, but the Catholic Church accredits him as its most official teacher of philosophy as

well as of theology. No other of its children since the time of the Apostles has the claim, as Aquinas has the claim, to represent the substance of the Church's wedlock with philosophy. The modern world will find Aquinas' letters of commission in the great Codex Juris Canonici, the first official code of Church law, and indeed the most historic code of laws issued for the guidance of mankind. Its sober authentication of the claim of Aquinas will show our readers why in a short study of the Church and Philosophy we have largely centred our study on the Church's greatest philosopher.

"Let professors direct the study of rational philosophy and of theology and the formation of the students in these sciences according to the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor; and let them hold these sacred." [13]

The passage from the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas is manifestly a product of the thirteenth, indeed of the late thirteenth century. As it stands it is as characteristic of its age as the sculptures on the west front of Wells Cathedral or the painted glass of Chartres.

Readers will notice how clearly and unflinchingly he uses such words as *reason, faith, authority, will.* But readers must be cautioned against the

[13] "Philosophiae rationalis ac theologiae studia et alumnorum in his disciplinis institutionem professores omnino pertractent ad Angelici Doctoris rationem, doctrinam et principia, eaque sancte teneant." (Can. 1366, § 2.)

mistake of supposing that in the mind of St. Thomas authority is merely an unreasonable short-cut to truth; and especially to philosophical truth.

It has often been thought that for St. Thomas the authority of Aristotle was supreme; whereas devotedly as he followed Aristotle, there was for him but one supreme authority, the First Truth who was God. Yet students of history, on finding all that Aquinas did for Aristotle, and all that Aristotle did for Aquinas, might well believe the Greek to be the sole master in philosophy of the Italian.

Aquinas' Services to Greek Philosophy

Two things the Italian had done for the Greek. 1. Aquinas had permanently given a home to Aristotle's psychology, metaphysics and especially ethics within the Catholic Church. What a victory was meant when Western Catholics fed on the Peripatetic may be gauged by the saying of a writer of the fourth century that "Aristotle was the Bishop of the Arians."

When Aquinas habitually called Aristotle the Philosopher, the Peripatetic was assured of the immortality of the Catholic Church.

2. But to this patronage of Aristotle St. Thomas added the further service of explanation. Not only were Aristotle's works put forward as of value, but they were explained and developed in being put forward. A proverb says:

Sine Aquinate
Silet Aristoteles
Without Aquinas Aristotle is dumb.

None of the great sections of Aristotle's thought was left untouched by Aquinas, and he touched nothing that he did not kindle to new life. His mental attitude to this master and his fellow-Greeks has found daring expression in these words written towards the close of his life, and under pressure of lesser men's criticism: "The study of philosophy is in itself lawful and commendable, on account of the truth *which the philosophers acquired through God revealing it to them,* as stated in Rom. i. 19."[14]

The Church of the thirteenth century ranking Greek philosophers amongst the prophets receiving a divine revelation is assuredly a lesson in breadth of vision!

Aquinas No Slavish Copyist of Philosophers or Fathers

Yet this man who could look upon Aristotle and Plato as receiving a divine revelation had no exaggerated view of their authority. Indeed a phrase of his holds such golden wisdom and is such a needed commentary of our modern efforts after philosophical studies that we cannot withhold it from our readers. In his commentary on Aristotle's *On the Heavens and the World* he deals with the Question: "Whether the world was generable and incorruptible." Before he gives his own

[14] *Summa Theologica,* Pars 2ª, 2ae, Qu. 167, Art. 1, 3m.

opinion he discusses three other opinions, one of which was attributed to Plato. He then adds:

> Some however say that these poets and philosophers, especially, did not really think what their words literally mean, but that they wished to veil their wisdom under certain fables and metaphors. Moreover it was the custom of Aristotle to argue not against their meaning (which was sound) but against their words, lest anyone by such a way of speaking should be led into error, as Simplicius says in his commentary.
>
> On the other hand, Alexander was of the opinion that Plato and the other ancient philosophers really meant what their words said; and therefore that Aristotle sought to refute not merely their words, but their meaning.
>
> However, this may be, it is no great matter to us, *since the study of philosophy is not that we may know what men think, but what is the real truth of things.*[15]

That this principle was not merely an academic disinterestedness towards the heathen philosophers may be seen in his attitude towards even the Fathers of the Catholic Church. No student ever gave them more filial respect. When as a young friar he first caught sight of Paris, where he was to study, his companion, pointing out its glory of architecture, asked him what he thought at the sight. His answer is a student's: "I would rather

[15] *De Coelo et Mundo*, Bk. I, lect. 22.

have Chrysostom's *Commentary on St. Matthew!"* Yet there are times when he explicitly departs from and even corrects Chrysostom. Hilary and Augustine fares as Chrysostom fares: he uses them as authorities, but he feels freedom to make his own conclusions. Again he quotes "the Greek Fathers and St. Jerome"—surely a formidable authority. But after quoting them he quietly gives up their opinion for his own.

Perhaps his most daring attitude is towards Pope Innocent III, in a passage dealing with the difficult psychology of the human nature assumed by Jesus Christ. Of the Pope's words he says that they could not be used *properly* to express the truth.[16]

All this attitude towards authority is that sound sense which is the base of all sound philosophy.

On Logic

a. Accurate use of words.

Readers of the passage from the *Summa* will also notice how precise is the use of the words and of the arguments. Indeed almost seven hundred years of criticism have not discovered one word used wrongly or one argument that was disqualified as mere reasoning. In other words, this philosopher of the medieval Church has so mastered the *Organon* of Aristotle as to be an accomplished logician. If we may believe St. Thomas, his idea of logic was that it was an art enabling an intelli-

[16] *Summa Theologica*, Pars 3, Qu. 4, Art. 2, 3m.

gence to make words into true sentences and into true syllogisms or arguments.

His attitude towards words was always that of supreme good sense. Thus provided we reach the true meaning, *"de nominibus non est curandum"* [17] (the words do not matter). If moderns could only accept this principle, a large part of our contemporary discussions would become superfluous.

It is probable that no scientific writer has so large a vocabulary as that of St. Thomas. Yet the present writer after some thirty-five years study of the works of St. Thomas has not found one word coined by him. He is perfectly content to do his thinking by means of the intellectual currency of his age. But although he has not sought to add to our vocabulary one word of his own coining, he has used no word without enriching it, not with a new, but with a fuller meaning.

What could be in greater contrast with the manner of modern philosophers, especially the psychologists? Nowadays almost every professor, if not every book, has its own vocabulary; which, for the student in search of a degree, is a Volapük to be mastered before a degree can be an object of hope. Moreover, some of these new words are so assertive as to rival Anselm's idea of God, which was of such a nature as to dispense with proof. Words like evolution, progress, modern thought, modern research are looked upon as almost self-existent as well as self-assertive. Yet they but re-

[17] Ibid., Pars 1, Qu. 54, Art. 4, 2m.

mind us of the deep philosophy kneaded into Mr. Chesterton's epigram: "Eugenics is not a science. Eugenics is a—stink!"

It is almost incredible what precision and thrift of words is to be found in the great Catholic philosopher of the Middle Ages. In volume his *Summa* is at least one million and a half words! Yet it is hardly possible to remove a hundred sentences; and it is seldom possible to remove even a word, without damaging the fabric of the writer's thought. It is no exaggeration to say that there is not one adjective, as such, to be found in it from beginning to end. The seeming adjectives are, in the context, more accurately to be classed as substantives. In the one autograph work still extant, the *Summa contra Gentiles,* there are endless erasures showing how assiduously he removed every superfluous adjective. Few thinkers had ever realized that if the art of logic is to be worthy of its name (Λογική from Λόγος, a word) it must use words in their exact meaning, and link them together without doing their meaning an injury.

b. Use of argument.

The Catholic medieval philosophers, especially St. Thomas, knew the fine art of giving their reasoning its least word-encumbered expression. Their arguments even when tested by the spirit-levelling process of the syllogism concealed no four terms or undistributed middles! Even the untrained reader, to whom the passage from St. Thomas is

presented for the first time, will feel the difference between it and modern books in the method of presenting arguments. Modern books are diffuse. They tend to be what is called literary. St. Thomas presents the truths of philosophy in a form akin to Euclid; which is not as a rule taken to be literary.

All this neglect of the mere literary mode for the substantial truth is a justification of common sense; which in its search for what is true does not wish to be put off with what looks true. Hereupon we may quote one of the chief Catholic scientists of to-day:

> There is no more bracing mental gymnastic than the Scholastic Philosophy, and there is nothing which will more safely keep the scientific worker, Catholic or not, out of the numerous pitfalls which await him on his way. It is my lot, and has been for a number of years, to read scientific books for the purpose of review. I am sure that I am not exaggerating when I say that there are philosophical errors in at least fifty per cent. of them which might and would have been avoided if their authors had ever taken the trouble to get a real grip of Logic—not to speak of other branches of Philosophy; for no one who had ever learned to make a syllogism could possibly put forward the kind of arguments which one reads only too frequently, in some of these books, especially the MANUALS of sciolists.[18]

[18] *Inter. University Magazine*, vol. i, No. 1.

This judicial verdict of one qualified to know and judge may prepare the modern mind to feel grateful towards the medieval mind which presented truth bereft of all ornament save the ascetic garb of logic.

But if St. Thomas can be considered typical of his fellow-medievalists, logic was chiefly valuable as an intellectual sieve for screening out intellectual error, rather than as an intellectual tool for fashioning truth. In saying this we do not mean that there is no logical method in his development of truth; but we mean that the syllogism, so characteristic of formal logic, is used less in his evolution of proof than in his statement and refutation of error. In his positive development of doctrine, his view that growth in knowledge was a gradual progress from the more obscure to the less obscure, from the more general to the less general, led him to an orderly exposition which is almost his chief claim to supremacy as a thinker. Perhaps no man of genius has ever equalled his hold of the principle of order or series. Long before the chemists had detected this principle in the chemical qualities of matter, St. Thomas had in ten thousand circumstances assumed it as a cosmic law. He is never satisfied with a subject until the subject matter is arranged in order or series. Only when the series seems complete and consistent does his synthetic mind feel at rest.

c. Use of series [*order*].

He has an epigram expressive of this in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*: "Respublica comparatur ad civitatem sicut vita. Est enim respublica ordo civitatis. *Ordo autem vita est quaedam ejus cujus est.*" [The common weal is compared to the City as Life. For the commonweal is the order of the City. But *order is the Life of that in which it is.*] [19]

To illustrate this by examples from his psychology and ethics:

In his *Summa Theologica* he has a Question: "Of the Intellectual Powers." When introducing his *Summa* to the world he called it "milk for babes" and promised to treat everything briefly, clearly and in its natural order. Therefore, when dealing with the question of man's intellectual powers, he proceeds in an orderly way to build up the doctrine by answering a number of orderly questions:

1. Whether the Intellect is a power of the Soul?
2. Whether the Intellect is a passive power?
3. Whether there is an Active Intellect?
4. Whether the Active Intellect is something in the Soul?
5. Whether the Active Intellect is one in all?
6. Whether Memory is in the intellectual part of the Soul?
7. Whether the intellectual Memory is a power distinct from the Intellect?

[19] *Polit.* IV, 10.

8. Whether the Reason is distinct from the Intellect?
9. Whether the Higher and Lower Reason are distinct powers?
10. Whether Intelligence is a power distinct from Intellect?
11. Whether the Speculative and Practical Intellects are distinct powers?
12. Whether Synderesis is a special power of the Soul distinct from the others.
13. Whether Conscience is a power? [20]

It will be seen how empiric and synthetic is this series. The same synthetic effort towards truth may be exemplified by his ethical Question: "Of Justice."

1. Whether Justice is fittingly defined as being *the perpetual and constant will to render to each one his right?*
2. Whether Justice is always towards another?
3. Whether Justice is a virtue?
4. Whether Justice is in the Will as its subject?
5. Whether Justice is a general virtue.
6. Whether Justice, as a general virtue, is essentially the same as all virtue?
7. Whether there is a particular besides a general Justice?
8. Whether particular justice has a special matter?
9. Whether Justice is about the Passions?
10. Whether the Mean of Justice is the real Mean?

[20] *Summa Theologica*, Pars I, Qu. 79.

11. Whether the act of Justice is to render to each one his own?
12. Whether Justice stands foremost amongst all moral virtues? [21]

These two examples taken casually from one of this medieval philosopher's works will witness to the writer's wholehearted desire for truth. In his search for the philosophic truth which he desires he patiently seeks it in as orderly a way as Euclid used to investigate geometric truth.

Investigation will show how rarely in this synthetic method he used the syllogism.

d. Use of the syllogism.

But if the syllogism is rarely used in his positive investigation and statement of truth, it is most commonly used in the statement and refutation of objections against the truth. Examples of this may be found in the article at the head of this chapter (page 26).

To take another example. In his well-known Question: "Whether God Exists," [22] he puts two Objections, to each of which he gives an answer. It may be noted in passing that these are the only two supreme Objections arguable against the existence of a First Cause, who is infinite in power and goodness. The first Objection is commonly labelled, "The Problem of Evil."

[21] Ibid., Pars 2^a, 2^{ae}, Qu. 58.
[22] Ibid., Pars I, Qu. 25, Art. 3.

The second Objection is "The Sufficiency of Nature."

I.

If one of two contraries be infinite the other would be destroyed. But the word "God" means that He is infinite goodness. If, therefore, God existed there would be no evil discoverable; but there is evil in the world. Therefore God does not exist.

II.

It is superfluous to suppose that what can be accounted for by a few principles has been produced by many.

But it seems that everything we see in the world can be accounted for by other principles, supposing God did not exist. For all natural things can be reduced to one principle, which is Nature; and all voluntary things can be reduced to one principle, which is human reason or will.

Therefore there is no need to suppose God's existence.

I.

As Augustine says (Enchir. xi): "Since God is the highest good, He would not allow any evil to exist in His works, unless His omnipotence and goodness were such as to bring good even out of evil. This is part of the infinite goodness of God that He should allow evil to exist and out of it to produce good."

II.

Since Nature works for a determinate end under the direction of a higher agent, whatever is done by Nature must needs be traced back to God as to its first cause.

So also whatever is done voluntarily must also be traced back to some higher cause other than human reason or will, since these can change or fail; for all things that are changeable and capable of defect must be traced back to an immovable and self-necessary first principle.

No one who has read much of modern philosophy can fail to envy a method of exposition which is so merciful to the average mind. The medieval Catholic philosopher jettisons every superfluous word. The thought, such as it is, finds

an ascetic self-expression in a minimum of words. But the tense difficulty and no less tense reply are, as they are meant to be, nothing more than exact outlines or maps of the matter. They are not meant to be an adequate expression of the matter; just as an accurate high-scale map of the United States is an inadequate picture of the United States. But how serviceable is such a map to the ordinary wayfarer who is travelling throughout the United States.

In the present matter of the existence of an Intelligent First Cause, these outlines are sometimes taken by casual readers of the *Summa* to be his full answers, instead of being merely accurate outlines. We need hardly tell our readers that these outlines on the subject of Evil and Causality received from the hands of St. Thomas a scientific elaboration which has left all later thinkers heavily in his debt.

How happy would be the lot of a Catholic in these days of wordy disputes if the attack on the Catholic Church or on revealed religion would renounce mere wordiness for a stern thrift of self-expressed truth.

A fine passage from Coventry Patmore may reinforce what we have said so ill:

> Bacon and Macaulay both charged Plato with being occupied by words, not things; as if the words of Plato were not often things, at once the topmost flowers and fruits of that tree, both of Life and Knowledge, of which the roots are

forever hidden in the speechless depths. A man may read Plato without clearly comprehending much of what he means. He cannot read him without becoming in some degree a changed man. But he may read and understand every line that Lord Macaulay ever wrote without any other profit than that of having extended his knowledge of historical facts, and having become perhaps a clearer writer and speaker.

The same authorities bring the same charge, namely, that of being mere players upon words against Aquinas and all the schoolmen; whereas, to a man who feels there can be nothing worthy of interest in comparison with himself, the *Summa* of St. Thomas must be the most real and interesting of books; for it contains hundreds and hundreds of perfectly clear-self-evident and final definitions of things, for want of being clear about which many men, and those the best, find their thoughts and ways beset by scruples and difficulties. Twenty years before I saw my way to the adoption of any fixed Creed the *Summa* was to me the most delightful and profitable of reading; and I think I am less than most men given to mistaking words for things.[29]

e. Scheme of study.

The hunger and thirst of Aquinas for truth rather than appearance, for the meaning rather than the sound of words, may be found in his scheme of study. Commenting on a passage of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics,* St. Thomas says:

[29] *The Root, the Rod, and the Flower* (2d ed.), p. 81.

Whereupon he moves the question why a youth can become a mathematician, but cannot become a wise man [sapiens], that is, a metaphysician or a physicist, that is, a natural philosopher.

[To this the Philosopher replies that mathematics] are known through abstraction from sensibles which come through experience; and therefore in order to know them no great time is needed. But principles of Nature, which are not abstracted from sensibles, are learned by experience, for which time is needed. As for Wisdom, he adds that the young do not believe wisdom, that is, Metaphysics; in other words, they do not grasp them with their mind, though they may say them with their mouth. But as for mathematics, their nature is not unknowable to them, since the formal objects in mathematics are in things of the imagination, whereas matters of wisdom are things of pure intelligibility.

Now the young can easily grasp what falls under the imagination. But they do not grasp with their mind things that are above sense and imagination because they have not yet an intellect trained to such thoughts, both on account of their age, and also on account of the many changes of nature.

This therefore will be a fitting order of learning: First, let the young be instructed in Logic, since Logic gives the method of all Philosophy.

Secondly, they are to be taught mathematics, which neither demand experience nor transcend imagination.

> Thirdly, in Natural Philosophy; which although not exceeding sense and imagination, nevertheless need experience.
>
> Fourthly, in Moral Science; which demand experience and a soul free from passions.
>
> Fifthly, in things wise and divine [sapientalibus et divinis]; which transcend imagination and demand a strong intelligence.[24]

We need hardly remind our readers that this medieval Catholic philosopher has here outlined that liberal education which has almost become a thing of the past, to the manifest hurt of the rulers and ruled in the Commonwealth.

f. On doubt, truth, natural science.

Before leaving this study on the medieval Catholic philosopher's attitude towards logic, our readers may care to read what St. Thomas has said on the need of opposition and of doubt. (1) He ends his treatise, "On the Perfection of the Spiritual Life," a book written in self-defence, with these words: "If anyone is minded to write against these things, I shall be most grateful. There is no better way of laying truth bare and undoing error than by withstanding gainsayers; according to the saying of Solomon [Pr. xxvii. 17]: *Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the face of his friend.* May God judge us and them, who is blessed for ages of ages. Amen.

(2) His words on the need of doubt are of

[24] *In Libros Ethicorum ad Nicomachum*, VI, sect. 7.

primary importance, and are in his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: "As in judgments no one can judge unless he hears the arguments of both sides, so whoever would study philosophy will necessarily judge better if he hears all the arguments of the opponents who doubt." And he quotes the master: *"to those who wish to investigate truth it belongs to doubt rightly."* [25]

The words are almost a forecast of the hypothetic doubt of Descartes, from which the modern phases of philosophy have sprung.

Our readers may be glad of the following quotations:

> *On Doubt.* Anyone who seeks after truth must begin by doubting stoutly because the finding of truth is nothing else but the solving of doubt. Everyone knows that a man who cannot see where the knot is cannot untie a bandage. But a doubt in one's mind is like a bandage on one's body and produces the same effect. The doubter suffers inconveniences analogous to those who are bound. When a man's legs are tied he cannot march forward; and when a man has his mind tied up with a doubt he cannot make any progress in speculation. That is why anyone who wishes to solve any doubt must begin his work by examining all pertinent difficulties and their causes, just as anyone who wishes to untie a bodily knot must begin by studying the knot and the way it is made.

[25] In *Metaph.* lect. 1.

. . . It is clear that anyone who does not know where he is going cannot go straight except by chance. Hence no one can keep on the right path in the search for truth unless he knows beforehand the doubt of the question. . . . Just as in the courts no one can act as judge who has not heard all sides, so the hearer of philosophy is better able to act as umpire if he has been told all that the doubting adversaries have to say for themselves. . . . Those whose aim is to discuss truth and truth only must not take up an attitude of hostility to any of the disputants on whose claims they are about to sit in judgment. Their proper attitude towards all parties is that of impartial investigation.[26]

On Truth. Truth is, in sooth, a super-excellent friend to whom is due a reverential honour. For truth is, in a sense, divine. It is found fundamentally and primarily in God. Hence Aristotle concludes that it is a sacred duty to love truth more than friends. Sanctity, as Andronicus the Peripatetic says, makes people staunch and inflexible in the service of God. Plato is of the same mind. For when setting aside an opinion of Socrates, who was his master, he declares that one must be more careful of truth than of anything else. And he says elsewhere: Socrates is a friend; but truth is a greater friend. And in another place he writes that one may make little of Socrates but one must make much of truth.[27]

[26] Ibid.
[27] Comm. in *De Coelo*, I, lect. 22.

> *Natural Science.* He who despises natural science despises himself. It is true that many writers make little of the natural sciences on the ground that such sciences are useless for that speculation about divine truth which is . . . the happiest and most desirable life for man. Such writers, however, are mistaken. All the sciences of Nature—not merely those which deal with general truths but also those which deal with particular facts and the properties of each being—are helpful in making God known to us, for we arrive at a knowledge of causes by starting from those obvious and natural facts which are their effects.[28]

On Psychology

If in his logic the medieval Catholic philosopher stood solidly in defence of the normal man's sound sense, he kept the same attitude of defence in his psychology. But it was a defence that made psychology, if not the centre, at least the key to all the other parts of philosophy.

Almost in the first lines of his commentary on Aristotle's *On the Soul,* a phrase of his master's occasions the following:

> The knowledge of the soul would seem of great profit to all the truth taught by the other sciences.
>
> For if we consider *First Philosophy* [i.e. Metaphysics], we cannot come to the knowledge of divine and supreme causes, save by what we acquire through the power of the passive intellect.

[28] Comm. in *Meteor,* IV, lect. 1.

> If, indeed, the nature of the passive intellect was unknown to us, we could not know the order of separated intelligence, as the Commentator [i.e. Averröes] says on the eleventh book of Metaphysics.[29]
>
> If we consider *Moral Philosophy*, we cannot reach perfect moral science unless we know the powers of the soul. Hence the Philosopher in his Ethics assigns the various virtues to various powers of the soul.
>
> Moreover it is useful to Natural Philosophy, since a great part of natural beings have a soul, and the soul is the fount and principle of all movements of animate beings.[30]

Now this knowledge of the soul which St. Thomas looks upon as the key to all perfect philosophy is not the denial but the affirmation and confirmation of sound sense. Even when medieval psychology is using a method and a terminology not wholly understanded of the people, it is leaning upon and thereby buttressing the sound sense which has formed the language of the people.

Indeed it is almost incredible how few technical words the medieval philosophers used in their psychology. An interesting study might be made contrasting the number of technical words nowise understood by the average man, and contained in the psychology of, on the one hand, St. Thomas, and on the other, any modern writer on psychology.

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[29] In *Ethic*, Bk. VI, lect. 7.
[30] Ibid., Bk. I, lect. 1.

Strangely enough not a few of the old words are now taboo. Attempts are made to write treatises on psychology without using the word *faculty* or *power*. An even more daring attempt is often made to write a treatise on psychology without using the word *soul!* One might as well try to write a treatise on military strategy by leaving out the word *war* or the word *defence*.

In this way the empiric, unorganised psychology of the normal man was made the key to all philosophy. 1. Firstly, of the philosophy of Nature. The normal man, thanks to his own convictions and intuitions, was quite certain that there was a distinction between beings with a soul and beings without a soul. Moreover, he felt instinctively, though not explicitly, that this distinction between them was the main distinction.

Inanimate and animate things might differ in a thousand other ways—in bulk, shape, weight, density, endurance, economic value, etc.—but the main distinction which gave them their place in the order of beings was whether they had or had not an internal principle of self-movement, i.e., a soul.

2. The normal man, again, was sound in his instinctive feeling that only from sound psychology could come sound ethics, and those other sciences as economics and politics, which are in the keeping of ethics. No ethical teacher has ever surpassed St. Thomas in his constant use of psychology in the development of his scientific ethics.

The psychological fact of different spiritual faculties was not an academic assumption too subtle for the acceptance of the normal man. On the contrary, it was an accepted and understood doctrine of the normal man so fundamentally true as to be worthy and patient of academic justification. The normal man knew there was no subtlety in saying that his eye was not his ear, or that his right ear was not his left ear, his right eye not his left eye, his right hand and foot not his left hand and foot. And he would be amazed to hear himself accused of subtlety merely because he said that his intellect was not his will, and that his intellect or will was not his soul. No more than this, though an analysis of this, was meant by the medieval Catholic philosophy which held the existence of spiritual faculties of the soul really distinct from each other and from the soul.

3. The normal man was quite sound on the doctrine that the main difference between himself and other animated bodies and the main foundation of ethics and all derivative sciences was his free-will. He was quite certain he had the power of choice, in a way that was not given to a plant or an animal. Of course the normal man, like the scientific man, could be confused by long arguments or even long words. But no metaphysical difficulties could quench his belief in human free-will, especially when he had social wrongs to denounce. He was mostly unmoved even by the subtle modern theories of Heredity and Progress—

of Heredity which absolved his responsibility for the present by an appeal to the past; of Progress which absolved his responsibility by an appeal to the future.

It was especially in the matter of free-will that the centre of psychology lay; and it was especially in a clear, strident affirmation of free-will that the medieval Church supplemented Greek philosophy. Even to-day, after six centuries of scientific justification of free-will, the doctrine of man's essential freedom is too often lost, even in universities, by a minute analysis of the physical reactions which accompany thought and will. Yet it is to the eternal glory of the Church's thinkers that they affirmed clearly what the Moslem and even the Jewish commentators on Greek philosophy denied or dared not affirm, namely, the freedom of the human will. Perhaps the most subtle undermining of free-will was in the Averroëstic doctrine of one passive intellect in all intellectual beings. This doctrine which the calm, profound criticism of St. Thomas laid to rest, destroyed all belief in human individuality and immortality, but was essentially opposed to the doctrine of human free-will, the basis of all ethics.

4. Lastly, the normal man's empiric psychology provided the only sound basis for *First Philosophy* or Metaphysics. An analysis of the ordinary words which a normal (Catholic) man will use accurately will provide almost the whole field of metaphysics. In saying this we do not

mean that the normal man could give a definition of even one of the terms he uses; but he uses them so accurately as to prove that he has an empiric knowledge; just as a ploughman may use the words "oats, barley, clay" without being a botanist or a chemist.

St. Thomas seems to insist that this empiric knowledge which human intelligence has of its own workings enables the philosopher who accepts this knowledge to go forward boldly into the spheres beyond the physical, where the only existence is intellectual existence. In other words, whilst he will not grant that matter can understand matter, seeing that it cannot understand, he will assert that intelligence can understand, even when it cannot comprehend intelligence. His attitude is that of St. Paul's letter to the Greeks of Corinth:

"The sensual man [i.e., the man who judges merely by the senses] perceiveth not those things that are of the spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, because it is spiritually judged. But the spiritual man [i.e., the man who judges by the higher intelligence] judgeth all things; and he himself is judged of no man."

In a very definite way this means that the categories which the normal man has by the knowledge of his own intellectual processes enable him to judge παντα—the ALL—in the divine science, the First Philosophy—metaphysics.

On Natural Philosophy

As in logic and psychology, so also in natural philosophy, the medieval Catholic philosopher's chief aim was to justify the intuitions of the normal man. His principle of investigation was the valid normal intuition of causality. He freely accepted the principle of causality without any attempt to prove its truth otherwise than it could be proved if it was true. For it is clear that if conclusions from principles are taken to be proved when they are shown to be conclusions, then it would seem that principles of conclusions should be taken to be proved when they are shown to be principles. One of the most widespread and infectious fallacies of our age is that of expecting one thing to be proved in the same way as a generically different thing—a principle to be proved in the same way as a conclusion; an intuition, as a ratiocination; a premiss, as a deduction; a cause, as an effect; a primary, as a secondary.

The normal man, even if he has never heard of Hume's youthful Gunpowder Plot against the principle of causality, is quite unmoved by it. What Galileo is reported to have said, when Roman theologians warned him off the Bible, might well be taken as the inarticulate answer of the normal man to Hume: "Anyhow it does move." And in this stolid front-trench sticking to the law of causality the normal man has provided all the physical or natural sciences with their possibility. If this principle of causality is given up, then the

sciences which are such a matter of pride to our generation are not true to nature, which far from being an orderly sequence of cause and effect is but a casual jostle of one thing after another.

It was Greek philosophic genius at its best which analysed the normal man's intuitions on causality into the four causes: two external (*Efficient Cause, Final Cause*), two internal (*Formal Cause, Material Cause*). The present writer has again and again tested quite young children, not indeed on their scientific knowledge, but on their empiric knowledge of these causes; only to find that they have a real grasp of them, each as distinct from the others. By this he does not mean that a child would understand the questions: "What is a Cause," or "What is a Final Cause," or "What is an Efficient Cause." But at an astonishingly early age the child quite clearly understands the difference between "I knocked the chair over *because* I wanted to amuse the baby" (*Final Cause*) and "I knocked the chair over *because* the baby pushed me" (*Efficient Cause*).

This scientific analysis of the normal man's causal intuition was taken over bodily and boldly by the medieval Catholic philosophers. With this key they unlocked the world. It was not of them that the Master said: "Woe to you lawyers; for you have taken away the key of knowledge. You yourselves have not entered in and those that were entering in you hindered" (Luke xi. 52).

What profound depths were sounded by this principle can be understood only by those who will read St. Thomas on such subjects as local movement, place, quantity, quality, relation. Even when the thinker seems beyond our depths of thinking he never seems to cut the line of communication with the normal man who sits safely on the land.

If in the question of organic being he accepts and develops the Greek synthesis, which knew no name until the nineteenth century called it Hylomorphism, it is largely because the sound sense, indeed the common consent of normal men and women, had an accurate grasp and a complete vocabulary expressive of a soul and a body and of their mutual relations.

On Metaphysics

Even in the difficult matter of metaphysics or First Philosophy, the medieval Catholic philosopher never allowed himself to despise or deny the implicit philosophy of mankind. The normal man has always been quite sound in holding that by his intellect (or what he would sometimes call his reason) he could discover and accept many truths, but not all truth. For him truth was the measure of his mind, and not his mind the measure of truth. No human, or as he would say, no created mind, was able to discover and accept all truth, because there were higher truths which the mind could only accept when they had been un-

covered, or revealed, by another higher mind. The normal man, in recognising that his intellect had a frontier, almost recognised that these frontiers had a beyond, whence tidings could come only through those who dwelt beyond the frontiers.

Hence in dealing with the First Philosophy the normal man empowered the philosopher to take soundings of the difference between Reason and Faith; to make maps, imperfect yet accurate, of the truths which Reason and Faith claimed as their own. The Article set down at the head of this division (page 26) is a philosophical explanation and justification of this attitude of mankind. It sums up the famous phrase: *Fides quaerens Intellectum* (Faith seeks Understanding), a phrase only complete by its obverse, *Intellectus quaerens Fidem* (Understanding seeks Faith).

It is difficult to draw up an accurate account of how heavily St. Thomas borrowed from his Arab and Jewish predecessors, when with no uncertain sight he discovered the realms of Reason and Faith. To Faith he saw belonged the great mysteries of the Trinity of Persons, and the Incarnation of the Son. Reason's great achievement was the demonstration of the existence of God from the effects of God. In crediting Reason with this power of reaching certitude about the existence of a First Uncreated Creating Intelligence Whom men could believe, St. Thomas was not only proving the reasonableness of Faith but was exalting Reason. In

the end the Catholic Church gave him due acknowledgment when, in 1870, the Vatican Council officially proclaimed that "holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the beginning and end of all things, may be certainly known by the natural light of human reason by means of created things. . . . If anyone shall say that the One true God cannot be certainly known by the natural light of human reason through created things, let him be anathema." [31]

The lesser problems of general metaphysics were discussed by the medieval Catholic philosoper with such delicacy as to leave unmoved, but not undeveloped, the simple intuitions of mankind. Substance and Accident, Necessity and Contingency, Possibility, Necessity and Impossibility, and even the transcendentals—Unity, Truth, Goodness, Beauty[32]—were not to the normal man mere "sound and fury signifying nothing," but were the outward symbols of a reality which they could understand without being able to justify or explain.

On Ethics

Though medieval Catholic thinkers like St. Thomas elaborated a logic, psychology, natural philosophy and metaphysics, resting on the sound sense of the normal man, it was chiefly in the matter of ethics that their most original work was done; and the chief worker in this field of ethics was St. Thomas.

[31] Conc. Vat., *De Revel.*
[32] Some writers do not accept beauty as a transcendental.

Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics,* though almost the finest fruit of Greek philosophy, had largely been neglected even in Greece. Islam neglected this Grecian ethics largely because it seems to demand, at least implicitly, the doctrine of free-will. This demand was too much for a system which seemed bound up, at least historically, with fatalism. Even the Jewish commentators on Aristotle could hardly look with complacency on a system which seemed to make their great lawgiver Moses a mere shepherd turned seer. Little or nothing in the controversies of the thirteenth century turned the minds of Catholic thinkers towards the Greek ethics. But in the Library of Gonville College, Cambridge,[83] there is a thirteenth-century manuscript which is one of the most romantic in the history of human culture. It is the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle, with a commentary on the text, and marginal notes on the text and commentary. Now the commentary is that made by Albert the Great when lecturing at Paris or Cologne; and the marginal notes on Aristotle and Albert are those of Albert's brilliant student, Aquinas.[84]

Much light is thrown upon the medieval Catholic enthusiasm for philosophy by the fact that the Greek text used by Albert in these lectures is mainly that made by Robert Grosstest, Bishop of Lincoln, between the years 1240-1243, when the

[83] And also in the Vatican, and at Vienna.

[84] Mgr. Auguste Pelzer, *Le cours inédit d'Albert le Grand sur la Morale à Nicomaque,* Louvain, 1922.

Bishop was approaching his seventieth year. As this course of lectures by Albert could not have been later than 1252, and may have been as early as 1248, it is striking to see how soon a Latin translation made by an English scholar, no longer teaching at a university, is in the lecture-halls of the university professor. Probably no cultural movement has ever equalled the enthusiasm of these men of the thirteenth century. The scholar to whom we owe what is here written adds these words, which confirm our view of this enthusiasm: "Whichever of the two dates we give makes this unedited course the first commentary or the first exposition accompanied by questions of which the *Nicomachean Ethics* has been the object in the Latin West." [85]

The brilliant young student who had taken down and, here and there, annotated his master's commentary on Aristotle never lost touch with the Greek masterpiece. Even while psychological, physical and metaphysical principles were fusing into an intellectual unity within his mind, he was adding to the synthesis the principles of ethics. When called to Rome by the Pope some eighteen or twenty years later, he astonished the city of Cato Major and the *De Officiis* by his lectures on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. But in thus giving scientific ethics to the headquarters of the Church, he was carrying out his friar's apostolic duty of offering the human mind and soul only the best.

[85] P. 28.

Never, perhaps, in the history of human thought had one mind borrowed so freely from another. Never had these borrowings been returned with such usurious interest. Every ethical truth that the Greek thinker had stumbled upon or had thought out was still further thought out by his Christian follower; and thought into the fabric of Christian ethics with such skill that the pagan teacher seemed almost a Christian before Jesus Christ.

Yet, as acute critics of the *Ethics* of Aquinas have observed, the pupil never slavishly follows his master. Indeed, as this same pupil will proclaim again and again, perfect mastery is not that over slaves but that over free men who, over and beyond their master's will, have a will and a way of their own. Indeed these same acute critics have noted that nowhere else in his works does St. Thomas quote authorities less frequently. Not indeed that he belittled authority, but that in this matter of scientific ethics he was almost a lonely pioneer. Where Aristotle, even helped by Albert the Great, could not reach, the Dumb Ox of Aquino had a way, and strength. No one else had ever gone so far. No one has yet gone farther. The *Ethics* of St. Thomas is still a book, if not to be discovered, at least to be explored.

a. The ethical end.

Masterpiece of deep thinking and accurate psychology that it is, it never fails to rest upon

the sound sense of the normal man; in other words, it is sound philosophy. The very fundamental conception of it is the justification of the normal man. St. Thomas very accurately observes that as the *end* is the scientific principle of ethics, Aristotle placed at the end the City or earthly Commonwealth; so that Greek ethics was the science of becoming a good citizen, and virtue was a habit enabling a man to be a good citizen, not only in thought and desire, but in deed. Human laws were also promulgated to make good citizens. And the morally good man was the good citizen.

This was a high ideal, but it was human. For the Christian philosopher the *end* of Christian ethics was not an earthly City or Commonwealth, but a heavenly City not built with human hands though destined for human hearts. Here the Catholic philosopher who accepted the normal man's intuition of Reason and Faith, and of a natural kingdom of knowledge and of a beyond, was equally humble and scientific in accepting this supra-natural Commonwealth descried by the intuitions of the normal man as the unifying principle of his ethics. In accepting this principle, far from denying the natural, he affirmed it on oath, reminding us of the strong strophe of the medieval hymn.[36]

[36] Hostis Herodes impie
Christum venire quid times?
Non eripit mortalia
Qui regna dat coelestia.

Thou wicked foe, Herod!
Why fearest thou Christ's coming?
He stealeth nothing earthly
Who giveth kingdoms heavenly.

The philosophy of history gives reason to this phrase of the poet. To put first things first is not to destroy but to fulfil things secondary. To worship God is to foster even the Arts and Crafts. But to put first things second is to degrade second and first alike. If anyone cannot see this written daily and nightly in the mirk or turmoil of our industrial cities he gives few signs of being a philosopher—however interested he may be or seem to be in philosophy.

In his ethics, as in every other part of philosophy, St. Thomas was the patient follower of the normal man, who in this matter of moral science was quite certain that ethics was a life rather than a science. Even as purely speculative principles were a man's when he not only understood them but accepted them, so likewise practical principles, as those of ethics, were a man's when he not only understood and accepted them, but when he lived them.

b. Intellectual and moral virtue.

How wholeheartedly St. Thomas was on the side of the majority may be gauged from his Objection and answer to the Question: "Whether there can be moral virtue without intellectual virtue.[37] His generic reply is: "Moral virtue can be without some of the intellectual virtues, viz.: wisdom, science and art; but not without understanding and prudence." His Objection is:

[37] *Summa Theologica*, Pars Ia, IIae, Qu. 58, Art. 4.

"By means of intellectual virtue man obtains perfect use of reason. But it happens at times that men are virtuous and acceptable to God, without being vigorous in the use of reason. Therefore it seems that moral virtue can be without intellectuals." To this psychological fact and logical deduction from the fact he replies, with a quiet sense of humour: "A man may be virtuous without having full use of reason with regard to everything; provided he have it with regard to those things which have to be done virtuously. In this way all virtuous men have full use of reason. Hence those who seem to be simple, through lack of worldly cunning, may possibly be prudent."

A long and intimate fellowship with the normal man has convinced the present writer that one of man's most romantic qualities is his deep-seated respect for "Education or Learning." Unfortunately this respect has been played upon by specialists, or rather faddists, in the interests of a kind of book-learning and token-learning which we are at length refusing to call education. This romantic respect, amounting almost to superstition, which the average man feels towards learning is analysed and justified by St. Thomas in answering the Question: "Whether the moral virtues are better than the intellectual virtues." St. Thomas answers firmly that

> speaking simply, the intellectual virtues which perfect the reason are more excellent than the moral virtues. But the moral virtues are more

lasting than the intellect virtues, because they are practised in matters pertaining to the life of the community. [Note how clearly he enunciates the principle that the ethical relation is a social relation. And the commonwealth is the Kingdom of God]. Yet it is evident that the objects of the sciences, which are necessary and invariable are more lasting than the objects of moral virtue which are certain particular matters of action—That the moral virtues are more necessary for human life proves that they are better not simply, but relatively.

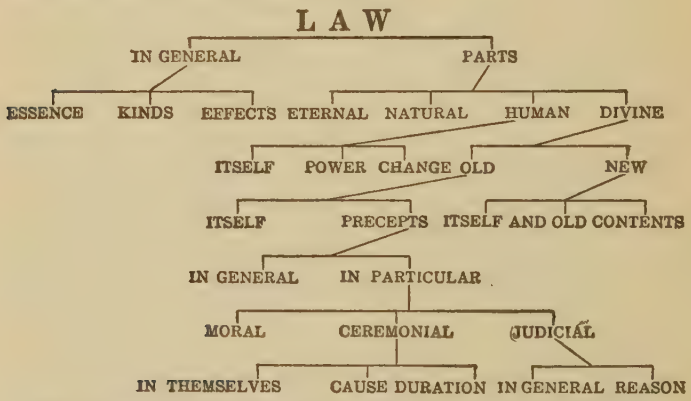
Indeed the speculative intellectual virtues from the very fact that they are not referred to something else as a useful thing is referred to an end, are more excellent. The reason for this is that in them we have a kind of beginning of that happiness which consists in the knowledge of truth.[88]

The preliminary treatise on the human passions is a masterpiece of empiric and scientific psychology without a rival. It largely served to give to the poets of the later ages the material of their tragedies. Everywhere its observation is so accurate as to justify the normal man who, on reading it, might see himself reflected as in a mirror. Yet it has almost become the grammar of the highest mysticism, providing mystical writers like St. John of the Cross with the materials of their craft.

[88] Ibid., Qu. 66, Art. 3.

c. On law.

One of the lesser treatises in the *Ethics* of St. Thomas is of classical perfection, although largely unknown to those to whom it would bring most enlightenment. It is the treatise "On Law." [80] As an example of a medieval philosopher's rigidly scientific method of setting out his subject we will set out the treatise in a scheme.



The genius manifested in this treatise will appear to those who reflect that before the time of St. Thomas there was no such treatise as he has given. Scattered here and there in codes of laws, ecclesiastical and civil, in glosses on laws, in Aristotle's *Ethics and Politics,* in Isidore's various treatises, and in a crowd of legal, ethical dogmatic books were various principles of law. But what had been done for the Roman laws by their codification had not yet been done for the scientific treatise

[80] Ibid., Pars Ia, IIae, QQ. 90-108.

on law. It was whilst at Bologna, the law university, that the genius of St. Thomas set the treatise in order. This order, which was, as we have said, one of the highest intellectual gifts, is seen not merely in the internal arrangement of the treatise itself, but still more in arranging it amongst other ethical treatises. To the accurate mind of St. Thomas, law, like economics, was essentially ethical. Civil laws that went against the moral law were not so much law as a kind of tyranny. But law was, in itself, one of the external principles of good human acts, which were the main concern of true ethics.

d. On economics.

If statecraft, to judge by this treatise on law, was but a part of ethics, still more was economics a part of ethics. On the ethical character of economics St. Thomas had no misgivings. Probably no worker has enunciated so many ultimate economic principles; most of them in his special treatise on *ethics*. Economists are being led to discover that already in the thirteenth century there was formulated a body of scientific thinking vitally linked with ethics, which if it had only been followed by later ages might have warded off the economic evils of to-day. Only at our risk can we ignore—as perhaps our predecessors have ignored—St. Thomas's doctrine on such questions as the equality of man, authority for service, the obedience of authority, wealth measured by state

and not state by wealth, the distribution of superfluous wealth not needed for state, the *inhonestas* of mere trading, the just price, the need of restitution, the crime of avarice, usury, the need of freedom, and a hundred other principles which the great thinker has not merely enunciated with clearness but has placed in their true ethical setting. In all these principles so clearly and so fearlessly enunciated this cousin of emperors, this brother of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, was on the side of the vine-dresser of the Apennines or the ploughman of the Sussex wold.

Summary

To sum up. Never had the world of thought witnessed such a power of assimilation and rejection as when the medieval Church assimilated all that was true and only what was true in Greek philosophy; first, as transmitted to it by Islam and Jewry; then, as discovered by its own enthusiastic efforts to reach this Greek wisdom in the original Greek.

If the intellectual movement called the Renascence was an effort to regain Greek culture, then the Renascence is to be found not in the sixteenth century but in the thirteenth. These thinkers of the thirteenth century acted humbly on Augustine's famous epigram: "If the pagans teach any truth, let us take it from them as from unlawful possessors." When the thirteenth century had rifled the harvest vineyard of this "glory that was

Greece," all that was left for the sixteenth century was a few autumn-tinted leaves to twine into wreaths for its singing men.

Never before had such an attempt been made to give the world a philosophy as such; because never before had the human mind attempted or achieved such a synthesis. Man's philosophy is in its very nature a man's thought. Yet, as we have said, philosophy is not something that a man thinks, but everything that a man thinks. So too philosophy is a view. But from the philosopher's point of view, or place of vision, he sees not things, but a world; the Catholic philosopher sees the other world.

It is almost incredible how vast was the synthesis which the mind of Aquinas attempted and achieved. In his profound speculations on the Relations, which are the Trinity, he gave to his diligent student, Hegel, many of the thoughts that second the modern thinker's claim upon posterity. Yet the mind of Aquinas was recognised by his contemporaries as being so many-sided that on his dying bed at Fossa Nuova he received from the university authorities at Paris a reminder that he had promised them a commentary on Plato's *Phaedo* and a treatise on aqueducts!

We must never tire of repeating that this vast synthesis, so far beyond the reach of the average man, was nowise the denial of what the average man could reach and see. Indeed it was but the undeniable intuitions of man classified and ar-

ranged in order or series. A modern philosopher has said of the Aristotelian philosophy that it was "une métaphysique qui est, croyons nous, la métaphysique naturelle de l'intelligence humaine." [40] Still more may the philosophy of the medieval Church be looked upon as "the natural metaphysics of the human intelligence." This claim is founded not merely on the fact that it is based on the accepted intuitions of man, but on the further facts of its rise and effect. It came into being largely through the activity of the mendicant friars; and its effect has lasted down to these days in the language and proverbs of the European poor. The friar movement was essentially a popular movement. It was a reaction against the idea that truth was fit food only for an intellectual élite. In its efforts to make even the highest truths somewhat understood by the people, it had a large, almost a main share, in the shaping of the vernacular romantic languages. Even the sixteenth-century drama was begotten by the Mystery and Morality plays which it employed to teach sound metaphysics, psychology, and above all, ethics. And its success was so great that in a few years the vested interests had to cry out against Everyman and his wife who were running after the friars.

Decay of Medieval Philosophy

But this instant success raises a disquieting question which may fitly close this chapter of our

[40] Bergson, *Evolution Creatrice* (2d. ed.), p. 354.

study. The success of this medieval assimilation of philosophy was immediate and widespread. Why then did this philosophy so soon hasten to decay?

To this poignant question we will offer not an answer, but some suggestions for those who are in search of an answer.

1. The fact of decay we think must be admitted. But the factors in this admitted decay are not easily admitted. In what did this decay consist? And by what was this decay caused?

2. It is sometimes said that Scholasticism wasted itself in vain subtleties. Again, we think the fact must be admitted. But in our denunciation of medieval subtleties we may be effectively denouncing the best instincts of modern science. Is anything more marvellous in modern science than the subtleties; in other words, the subtle subdivisions made possible by modern instruments of research, e.g., the microscope, the telescope, and the spectroscope, to name only a few.

To be fair to truth we must not forget the words of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: "For one useless subtlety in our elder divines and moralists, I will produce ten sophisms of equivocation in the writings of modern preceptors; and for one error resulting from an excess of distinguishing the indifferent I would shew mischievous delusions from the habit of confounding the diverse." [41]

[41] *Aids to Reflection*, Aphor. xxxiii. c.

St. Albert's College Library

3. The definition of a subtlety would lead us beyond the scope of this book. Yet in the matter of philosophy, which is above all things a view of the whole, a subtlety may be looked upon as such a view of a part or parts as prevents a view of the whole. In no other area of science has the specialist to encounter such dangers as in philosophy. Although a specialist in botany or in surgery runs dangers from his divorce from the wider science or art which includes his special sphere, yet to cease to have a general view of things and truth is to renounce philosophy. Once that general view has ceased to be actively sovereign in the mind, the more rapid and irresistible will be its decay.

4. But this general view tends to become secondary during periods of accepted sovereignty. St. Thomas has already been quoted in praise of opposition, as one of the main means for developing truth. When opposition became impossible or stagnant, philosophy, which is a mental activity, became itself stagnant.

Yet it is no easy task to diagnose the decay of a system which has been accused of such opposite qualities. On the one hand it has been decried as a dethronement and emprisonment of human reason. On the other hand it has been necessary for the Church to make explicit declarations that Scholasticism did not lead to Rationalism!

5. But leaving aside these internal causes, if they are causes, of its decay, we may find in the

decay of Greek philosophy in Greece some reasons for asking searching questions about the decay of Greek philosophy in the West.

It is not without significance that Aristotle was the tutor of Alexander the Great. Whether or not his philosophy was the stimulating cause of Alexander's success, it seems at least arguable that Alexander's success was in the end fatal to Aristotle's philosophy. The conquests of Alexander in the East by opening up new trade and trade-routes had made Greece the emporium of the world. The Greece that had loved Truth and Beauty as ends in life, now made commercial success the end of a life in which Truth and Beauty entered as an amusement or an adornment. Rapidly the connoisseur in art and philosophy, the dealer in art objects and manuscripts became of national importance. A statue of Phidias had a money value. A codex of Plato might buy a villa at the Piraeus. When Greece sought, as St. Paul found that it sought, news rather than truth, it was as good as dead. A carcass might feed a vine-stock or a vulture. But Greece of the philosophers was filletted for sacrifice to Mammon.

Not without significance is it that, when Greek philosophy rose again from its tomb in the thirteenth century, it seemed to rise wiser than before. It now linked its life with the professors of mendicant poverty, with those begging friars whose poverty aimed at enriching the world. Not a moment too soon came this challenge of Francis from

Umbria and Dominic from Northern Spain. The newly awakened West and the newly developed East were linked by a strong current of trade that was enriching the lands where the children of Dominic and Francis had found what most men looked on as a paradise, but what they had seen to be a battlefield. These men, with no explicit desire to save the philosophy of Greece, desired mainly to save the art of Truth and Goodness on which Greek philosophy was fastened like a clasp or gem.

From his boyhood Aquinas had looked upon what our forefathers called "wilful" poverty as the appointed life-mate of philosophy. For this ideal he had sacrificed everything. His daily prayer was that he might never rise to honours in the Church. God honoured his desire by allowing him to die a simple friar in a cell that was not his own.

Towards the end of life when he was writing the treatise of Jesus Christ which Didon looked on as the greatest human monument ever raised to the Incarnate Word, his thoughts on poverty and philosophy found vent in an Article: "Whether Christ should have led a life of poverty in this world?" [42] In writing it he was perhaps unconsciously laying down one of the main principles of the philosophy of history. But there is more than strikes the eye in his answering the question by insisting that "the Word made Flesh came as a divine philosopher to teach and preach the

[42] *Summa Theologica*, Pars III, Qu. 40, Art. 3.

truth." It was fitting for Christ to lead a life of poverty. First, because this was in keeping with the duty of preaching, for which purpose He says that He came (Mk. i. 38): *Let us go into the neighboring towns and cities that I may preach there also; for to this purpose am I come.*

Secondly, lest if He were rich, His preaching might be ascribed to cupidity. Wherefore Jerome says on Matt. x. 9 that if the disciples had been possessed of wealth, they had seemed to preach for gain, not for the salvation of mankind. And the same reason applies to Christ.

This is no uncertain cry from Bethlehem, Nazareth and Golgotha—indeed from Cologne, Oxford, Bologna, Paris! Had that cry of medieval philosophy moved its hearers or its utterers the twentieth century would not now be looking amongst the broken shards of Athens and Paris for the makings of a new philosophy. But—question of questions for those without and within the liberties of the Catholic Church—was the cry gradually stifled until it became at last too weak to be heard? Was the lyric cry of the Poverello at last stifled under the phrase "ideal"? Was the tragic mooing of the Dumb Ox deadened by the phrase "impracticability"?

6. Men are beginning to find in the debris, not of the thirteenth century, but of the twentieth, a call to answer these questions with words that may mean a new rising from the dead. We make our own, with some restrictions, words like the following:

Stripped of the eccentricities of period and place, *its philosophy* had at its centre a determination to assert the superiority of moral principles over economic appetites, which have their place in the human scheme, but which like other natural appetites when flattered and pampered and overfed bring ruin to the soul and confusion to society.

Its casuistry was an attempt to translate these principles into a code of practical ethics sufficiently precise to be applied to the dusty world of warehouse and farm.

Its discipline was an effort, too often corrupt and pettyfogging in practice, but not ignoble in conceptions, to work the Christian virtues into the spotted texture of individual character and sordid conduct. That practice was too often a sorry parody on theory is a truism which should need no emphasis. . . .

. . . But the quality in modern societies which is most sharply opposed to the teaching ascribed to the Founder of the Christian Faith, lies deeper than the exceptional failures and abnormal follies against which criticism is most commonly directed. It consists in the assumption accepted by most reformers with hardly less naïveté than by the defenders of the established order, that the attainment of material riches is the supreme object of human endeavour and the final criterion of human success. . . . It is the negation of any system of thought or morals which can, except by a metaphor, call itself Christian.[43]

[43] R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, pp. 285, 286.

CHAPTER III

THE MODERN CHURCH AND PHILOSOPHY

True Philosophy the Only Philosophy

We have given this chapter the title "The Modern Church and Philosophy" rather than "The Church and Modern Philosophy." The reason for our choice is that we know what is the Church and indeed the Modern Church, but we are at a loss to know what is Modern Philosophy. Assuredly for the last three centuries there has been a good deal of thinking or a good deal of denial in the matter of philosophy. But this does not prove that there is a system of coherent thought obvious enough to be called a philosophy, and original enough to be called modern.

Here let us do our best to scotch the fallacy that even what is untrue in itself can be truly philosophy. We shall despair of making this fallacy clearly in the wrong unless our readers agree that what is not truly *a* thing is not *that* thing; for example, what is not truly an egg is not an egg—what is not truly butter is not butter—what is not a true human being is not a human being—what is not true thinking is not thinking. Now the important quality in all these things is their truth.

To be fit food an egg must be a true egg, butter must be true butter. To be of importance to the statesman or the anthropologist the man must be a true man. To be of value to philosophy the thinking must be true thinking; in other words, as thought is an intellectual activity for arriving at the truth, any so-called intellectual activity which arrives at something which is not truth is not something we can call thinking.

In the same way as philosophy is supposed to be the organised truth about things, any so-called philosophy which misses the truth about things is not philosophy. We can call it "false philosophy" as we say "artificial eggs" or "sham butter" or "dummy man." But eggs are eggs, not sham eggs; and philosophy is philosophy, not false philosophy. To be philosophy it must be true; if it is not true, it is not philosophy.

Bacons' Scorn of the Greeks

As Bacon and Descartes are taken to be the founders or pioneers of modern philosophy, it may be of value to set down their stated attitude towards Greek philosophy.[1]

> The sciences which we possess have come down to us principally from the Greeks. For, what has been added by Romans, Arabs or later

[1] On the matter of subtlety, Bacon seems on the side of the angels when he writes: "The subtlety of Nature far exceeds the subtlety of sense and intellect; so that these meditations and speculations and reasonings of men are a sort of insanity (*Novum Organon*, Bk. I, Aphor. 10).

writers is neither much nor of great moment; but, such as it is, is founded on the discoveries of the Greeks. Now the wisdom of the Greeks was professorial, and given to disputations—a character most adverse to enquiry after truth; and so that title of Sophist, which was most contemptuously thrown back and transferred to the ancient rhetoricians, Gorgias, Protagoras, Hippias, Polus by those who wished to be esteemed philosophers, suits also the whole class, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Epicurus, Theophrastus and their successors Chrysippus, Carneades and the rest. . . . Both kinds though differing in other respects were professorial; both degraded the matter into disputation; both instituted certain philosophical sects and heresies and did battle for them; so that their teachings were almost [as Dionysius has not inaptly objected against Plato]. *Words of idle old men to inexperienced youth.* . . . Nor should we omit that judgment or rather oracular utterance of the Egyptian priest about the Greeks: *That they were always children, and possessed neither antiquity of knowledge, nor knowledge of antiquity.*[2]

The psychologist of history would have little clue to the present bankruptcy of philosophy if he did not give attention to the following sentiment of one who is looked upon as typical of the Renascence:

> And as to the opinion that in the philosophy of Aristotle there is certainly great consent . . . so that it seems to have been so well laid down

[2] Ibid., Aphor. 71.

and founded as to have drawn both ages to itself; we reply in the first place that . . . when human learning had so to speak, suffered shipwreck in the inundation of the Roman Empire by the barbarians, then the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato, like planks of a lighter and less solid material, were preserved on the waves of time.

Moreover, that notion of consent deceives men. . . . For true consent is that which consists in the coming of unfettered judgments to the same conclusions of the matter having been previously investigated. But by far the greatest number of those who have consented to the philosophy of Aristotle have enslaved themselves to it through prejudice and the authority of others; so that theirs is rather obsequiousness and concurrence than consent.

But even if it had been real and widespread consent, so little right has consent to be reserved as a true and solid authority that it even involves a violent presumption in the opposite direction. For the worst of all auguries is that which is drawn from agreement in intellectual matters, with the exception of Divinity and Politics, in which suffrages have lawful weight. . . . And so that saying of Phocion may very well be transferred from moral to intellectual matter: Men ought straightway to examine themselves as to what mistake or fault they have committed, if the multitude agree with and applaud them.[8]

[8] Ibid., Aphor. 77.

It is not within the scope or desire of this book to point out the philosophical errors and inconsistencies of this declaration. Strangely enough—or, perhaps, consistently enough—Bacon showed little more contempt for the thought of Plato and Aristotle than he did for the theory of Copernicus, or the discoveries of his contemporary and fellow-country man, Gilbert. We are merely concerned to point out how wide is the gulf between this attitude and that of the medieval Church. The Renascence, which might have been expected to exalt the pagans, is here seen to treat the greatest of the pagans, in the person of Bacon, with contempt.

The medieval Church, which might have been expected to treat them with contempt, is seen in the person of Aquinas to exalt them even to the point of calling them inspired!

Bacon's rhetoric of bitterness might probably have been forgotten if it had not germinated into the intellectual disease which at the head of this book we have diagnosed in the words of men who know. When this founder, as he is called, of modern empiric philosophy has thrust aside the common consent of the philosophers and of the multitude, he has made an end of that expert judgment and that sound sense which alone can be welded into a science worthy of the name of philosophy. Bacon sowed the wind, but did not live long enough to reap the whirlwind which we are still reaping.

Descartes' Scorn of the Greeks

Descartes' unacknowledged borrowings from his contemporary, Bacon, may be largely responsible for his hurried attempt to reach originality by denying the Greeks. Bacon's four sources of fallacious sciences and philosophies[4] are so akin in circumstance and series to Descartes' four ways of acquiring true science[5] that kinship rather than mere coincidence may link their common denunciation of the classical philosophers.

> Experience shows that they who profess philosophy are commonly less wise, use their reason not so well as those who have not given themselves to this study.... In every age there have been great men who sought to acquire a fifth way to science, far nobler and more certain than these four. They set their minds mainly on finding out first causes and true principles, from which they might deduce the reasons of whatever could be known. The men who acted in this way were especially called philosophers. Yet as far as I know, there was none of these who succeeded.
>
> The first and foremost of these whose writing we have are Plato and Aristotle. Between these two the only difference was that the first, who followed the footprints of his master Socrates, ingenuously confessed that as he could arrive at nothing certain, he was content to write what seemed to him probable. For this

[4] Ibid., Aphor. 69.
[5] Letters to Voet.

end he imagined certain principles to account for other things.

On the other hand Aristotle, with less ingenuousness, although for twenty years he had been Plato's disciple, and had no other principles than his, entirely changed the way of propounding them; and put them forward as true and right even though it seems likely that he never took them to be so.[6]

It is almost incredible that a founder of modern philosophy should make such a charge of deliberate lying against one of the greatest glories of human reason. But again, as in our words on Bacon, we quote the words of Descartes merely to show the gulf between the attitude of the medieval Church and these modern philosophers towards the summits of sound thinking.

Kants' Scorn of the Greeks

If, by adding the name of Kant, we may make this duumvirate into a triumvirate of philosophical founders, we may be struck by the fact that however little they agree in their own doctrines they are at one in disowning the Greeks.

Kant, like Bacon and Descartes, ingenuously professes that until he published his *Kritik* the central problem of philosophy had never been solved, if indeed understood. His own words are ingenuously solipsist!

This [*Critique of Pure Reason*] the only way that was left, I have followed; and I flatter

[6] Ibid.

> myself that I have thus removed all those errors which have hitherto brought reason, being unassisted by experience, into conflict with itself. . . . In this work I have chiefly aimed at completeness and I venture to maintain that there ought not to be one single metaphysical problem that has not been solved here, or to the solution of which the key at least has not been supplied.[7]

Each, but especially the last, of these three men imagined himself the deliverer of enthralled human reason, Kant even going the length of calling himself the Copernicus of human reason. Yet this "Atlas of German Philosophy," far from bringing freedom to the world, or even to the Prussia of philosophers, has ushered in an era of anarchy in philosophy. Thus Vailinger writes:

> The *Critique* is a work to which, whether we look at the grandeur of conception, or the accuracy of thought, or the weight of ideas, or the power of language, few can be compared—possibly Plato's *Republic;* Aristotle's *Metaphysic; Spinoza's Ethics*—none, if we consider their lasting effect, their penetrating and far-reaching influence, their wealth of thought, and their variety of suggestions.[8]

But this "influence" and "effect" are not perhaps such as Vailinger's a priori enthusiasm imagined, for elsewhere he writes: "Since the year

[7] *Critique of Pure Reason* (tr. by Max Muller, 1881), Vol. II, pp. xxiii, iv.
[8] Ibid., Vol. I, p. xxiv.
[9] Quoted ibid., p. xliii.

1840 there has been *hopeless intellectual anarchy in Germany*";[10] which, strangely enough, he *hopes* will be quelled by going "back to Kant."

"Hopeless intellectual anarchy!" The words are not ours. They come from the other side of the philosophical movement, not from our side. But though we have not uttered this damning judgment, we think it is a just judgment. It is no a priori view of the facts as they should be; it is a patient diagnosis of the facts as they are. It is a humble recognition of "Das Ding an sich"; which the true Kantian despairs of recognising.

But this cry of hopelessness which is forced from men against their will, leads to deep meditation of the cause of this cry. Had mere genius been capable of constructing or developing a true philosophy the triumvirate of Bacon, Descartes and Kant, this triple alliance of England, France, and Germany might have meant the intellectual enfranchisement of the world. Many of the traits of genius they held in common with each other and with the geniuses of the medieval Church. But one thing which they held in common is almost undiscoverable in the medieval Church. That thing or quality, necessary for all men of science and most necessary for men of the highest science, that is, for the philosopher, is "respect for authority." For the moment we are not concerned to define or limit this phrase, which is for us, as it was for the medieval philosophers, not a phrase but a

[10] Ibid., p. xxiii.

reality. We detect this reverence for authority in St. Thomas even when he is setting aside the opinions of his Greek masters. We fail to detect it in these later pioneers of modern philosophy, even when they accept (often without acknowledgment) the opinions of the Greek.

Had we the duty of mentally diagnosing these men we should have a hard task to decide whether in their unabashed self-trust they were not showing the traits of megalomania. Scholars who could so lightly set aside the profound generalisations of the Greeks were certainly not normal, whatever qualifying adjective we may add to their abnormality. Whether this abnormality was a fungus growing in their intelligence, or rooted in their will—perhaps unconsciously in their will—is a psychological problem which we can leave to others for solution.

Non tali auxilio! Such men are not definitely on the side of truth. Assuredly their zeal and some of their intuitions may yield some example to our sloth and some truths to our synthesis of the truth. But if ignorance has now become a world-wide disease and intellectual anarchy a permanent state in our seats of learning, it is because the triumvirate were intellectually diseased and anarchic. They had cut themselves off from that Latin civilisation which was at once Roman in its civic structure and Greek in its thought. Intellectual anarchy and ignorance were the inevitable wages of death.

The Modern Church's Cult of the Greeks

While these tragic fugitives from truth were sowing the whirlwind which our age is still reaping, the Church which was and still is Primitive, which was and still is Medieval, which is and always will be Modern, was safeguarding a philosophy it had gratefully received from the Greeks and had "taken unto its own."

Yet in its relation to philosophy as in its relation to art or to economics, the Church often seems unconcerned. We must remember that the Church is not primarily interested in art or economics; because neither art nor economics is primary. Zealots who make either art or economics their God are looked upon by the Church as blood-relations of men who serve Mammon. And whereas to serve God is to reign, to serve less than God is finally to become a slave.

Manuals of the history of philosophy, even when they give a page or two to the thinkers of the thirteenth century, hardly place in the interval between the thirteenth century and to-day, the name of one thinker who kept up the tradition of the medieval Church. This is not altogether an unreasonable omission; for the simple reason that during those years the Church's chief struggle was not with false philosophy but with false theology; and still more with the temptations of States that stifled by persecution or by patronage. For the last three hundred years the Church's first duty has been to exist, to

live. A thousand forces both within and without have threatened her life. When we consider such difficulties as the Avignon exile, the schisms, worldly prelates, sovereigns with divine rights who gave pragmatic sanctions, the Protestant exodus, the influx of Spanish gold, the popularisation and corruption of booklearning, the rise of commercialism and industrialism, the inroad of the Ottoman Turks, it would seem that the survival of the Church is almost a miracle written in every town and hamlet of Europe. No other great European institution has stood where the Church contrived to stand. Yet if life comes before philosophy, this struggle for mere existence gave the material but not the leisure for philosophy. And when one realises the intellectual anarchy that has sprung from the hurried thinking of even such geniuses as Bacon, Descartes and Kant, we are grateful to the Church that, in the hour when the sword or the trowel seemed most needed, it did not misspend its time in the library with a Greek text.

The Seminaries

Nevertheless, with that instinctive forecast of the future which is hardly human, it was serving philosophy better than it knew; and better than the headlong philosophers who thought to serve the future by denying what was true in the past. One of the most vital movements for sound philosophy came with the founding of the seminaries. One of the most tragic facts in the history of phil-

osophy is that the seminary system, so largely due to the English refugees from Oxford and Cambridge, was in the event destined to prepare men for the fierce discussion of the Assize Court and the gallows. But nevertheless, if a man was given a seminary training, he was not considered fit for his craft of priesthood unless he was largely formed by an intellectual culture which in its main lines was already old when St. Paul stood on the Hill of Mars.

This tradition of philosophy as a necessary preparation for the clerical profession still remains living and unique. The official "Code of Canon Law" for the Catholic Church, when legislating for the clerical studies of seminaries, orders that "the students shall apply themselves to rational philosophy and its kindred studies for at least two years." [11] There is a further course of four years in theology. This so-called theology with its practical and scientific ethics is so philosophical in its substance and form that the six years' preparation for the work of a priest are a very thorough preparation for the work of a practical philosopher.

The Children's Catechism

But indeed it is not the priest only who received a grounding in philosophy as a preparation for life. Even the Catholic child—I had almost said, especially the Catholic child in the poor schools—is supposed to have an implicit knowledge of

[11] *Codex Juris Canonici*, Can. 1365, sect. I.

philosophy which is a high compliment to its intelligence. The Catholic Church speaks nobly of children reaching the age of reason. Moreover, with profound insight into human nature, she puts this age not at forty or twenty-one years, but at seven years, when she teaches children their first lesson in freedom by helping them to see and say out (confess) their sins.

Before these little ones are thought fit to make their first declaration of their free-will by acknowledging their faults, and therefore their power, they are prepared by a noble handbook of philosophy, fitly called *The Children's Catechism.* As every country has its own method of writing and arranging this catechism, we take for our present purpose the catechism which, within a stone's throw of where I am now writing, is being taught to children of perhaps the most crowded slumland in the world. In sheer philosophic gratitude let me set down the first eight questions of this appeal made by *Alma Mater Ecclesia,* Dear Mother Church, to the philosophic intelligence of her children of seven!

1. *Who made you?*
   God made me.

2. *Why did God make you?*
   God made me to know Him, love Him and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next.

3. *To whose image and likeness did God make you?*
   God made me to His own image and likeness.
4. *Is this likeness to God in your body, or in your soul?*
   This likeness is chiefly in my soul.
5. *How is your soul like to God?*
   My soul is like to God because it is a spirit and is immortal.
6. *What do you mean when you say that your soul is immortal?*
   When I say that my soul is immortal I mean that it can never die.
7. *Of which must you take most care, of your body or your soul?*
   I must take most care of my soul; for Christ has said, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26.)
8. *What must you do to save your soul?*
   To save my soul I must worship God by Faith.

* * * * *

This fragment of literature torn from the front page of a catechism for the seven-year-old children of the poor is, for the present writer, a priceless gem-book of literature and philosophy.

In the realm of letters, is there any masterpiece in any language that opens so dramatically as this, with its almost fierce accost, "Who made you"?

If, since the time of Genesis and Plato, dialogue has been looked upon as a supreme form of literature, is there any more dramatic dialogue than this traffic of question and answer between the wisest institution in the world—and a child of seven?

But even the literary value of this page is less than its value in philosophy. So much sound Greek thought has been assimilated in this Catholic "milk for babes" that these schools of Catholic children, and especially of Catholic poor children,[13] are becoming the last homes of a liberal education. Already in the sixteenth century Giordano Bruno, on seeing the decay of philosophy, which had spread from the reformers, called Oxford "the widow of sound learning." But his wounded philosophic soul would have been soothed if he could have heard the Catholic children of the poor answer their catechism.

Accustomed as I am to philosophic categories and thoughts I should yet despair of enumerating all the philosophical principles to be found implicitly accepted by the child who answers these deep, simple questions.

Especially remarkable is the acceptance of that great Greek generalisation—the Four Causes.

Who made you? (Efficient Cause.)

Why did God make you? (Final Cause.)

To whose image and likeness did God make you? (Formal Exemplar Cause.)

[13] N.B. Who do not necessarily learn typewriting and shorthand.

Is this likeness to God in your body? (Material Cause) *or in your soul?* (Formal Internal Cause.)

Now the present writer, who has taught not only children but university students for some thirty-two years, bears psychological witness to the fact that little children even from the poorest classes usually give not a notional, but a real assent to these questions. The men who ask for a simpler creed not infrequently are ignorant of the child-mind, and in their ignorance, for something, like a primrose or a toy, which the child can understand but cannot explain, they substitute something like progress or evolution or ether, which the child-mind can neither explain nor understand!

Notice how deftly that part of philosophy called ethics (Qu. 7) is based upon that part of philosophy called metaphysics (Qu. 1, 2, 3) and psychology (Qu. 4, 5, 6).

Notice again how Descartes' discovery that truth should be investigated sectionally is here made to build up, stone upon stone, an unshakable fortress of truth. Hardly a spear-point of attack could find a fissure between the perfectly fitting courses of the structure. As a synthesis of thought it is masterly. Or again notice that the great truths underlying these questions are all within the discovery of human reason, yet human reason is not merely patient but expectant of faith (Qu. 8).

It will or should be conceded that an institution which offers even its children such solid philosophical food is doing its duty by philosophy.

Condemnation of False Philosophy

But throughout the last three centuries the Catholic Church has been furthering true philosophy by effectively warning men off false philosophy. Far from looking on the Church's condemnations as her weakest acts we look on them as almost the most praiseworthy or indispensable. We have not space to develop this thesis. But we invite all our readers to read any list of the various philosophical theories that have merited the Church's condemnation since the sixteenth century.

Pure ethics were never more in danger than when Molinos published his *Spiritual Guide* in 1671. It was a gesture of self-help that made the Church condemn the book for a number of maxims which it put forward. The list of these condemned propositions can only fitly be compared to a cesspool or a chamber of horrors. Yet it must not have been easy to condemn this ascetic or mystic Molinos who was not a hermit living in a desert, but the most popular father-confessor in Rome under the eyes of the Church's Supreme Head on earth!

The same stern love of truth rather than of kindred dictated the condemnation of Bonald, Bautain and Lammenais, whose attempts to defend the need of faith had led to a heresy against the rights of reason.

Even those who hoped to revive Catholic metaphysics by a new form of St. Anselm's proof of

the existence of God were not praised, but were condemned as Ontologists. It was as if the Church was watched over by the same Spirit that watched over Israel; who, in His care for His charge, struck dead the hand stretched out to save the falling ark.

But however much we may sympathise with these earnest thinkers whose thought was not finally authenticated by the Church, we can hardly refuse our admiration for the Church which spared not her own sons in the worship of truth. The Church's struggle for existence was too fierce for the niceties of philosophy. But if some of her sons ventured, in their love for her, to swerve a hair-breadth from the truth, she interrupted her battling to cry out loud, *Non sic, Non sic;* Not thus, Not thus. As her very battling was for the truth, she knew she could not finally be helped even by their unconscious lie.

Vatican Council Defends Reason

The modern Church's guardianship of philosophy reached its utmost in the General Council, called the Vatican Council, which assembled in Rome, December 8, 1869-July 18, 1870. The foregathering of some five hundred and forty bishops from all the continents and nations of the world was an event unparalleled in the history of the world. Even Imperial Rome had never witnessed such a foregathering of the highest forces of mankind. Not only were the new nations across the Atlantic present in numbers and influence, but

the older nations of Europe, then as now the battlefield of intellectual forces, sent men of unique experience and capacity who could be trusted to report accurately on the state of the intellectual battle. After one hundred and thirty-seven days of deliberation, and some forty-six committee meetings of the whole body of voters, these men issued a document of some three thousand five hundred words.[13] Their short document dealt with subjects that had never before been dealt with by such a representative assembly. It grouped its unique message to the intelligence of mankind under four heads, viz.: I. Of God the Creator of All Things; II. Of Revelation; III. Of Faith; IV. Of Faith and Reason.

It is probable that, in the main, the doctrines formulated by this first Parliament of Mankind were within the discovery of natural reason. One of these doctrines formulated by the Council is taken almost word for word from St. Thomas Aquinas: "It is to be ascribed to this divine revelation that such truths among things divine as of themselves are not above human reason can, even in the present condition of mankind, be known 1, by everyone with facility; 2, with firm assurance; and 3, with no admixture of error."[14] This fundamental statement taken almost verbally from St. Thomas was itself taken substantially from the Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides! A typi-

[13] That is, about one-eighth the bulk of the present volume!
[14] Concil. Vatican, Sess. III, I.

cal example of the Church's catholic power and desire of assimilation.

But the Church has throughout her experience showed herself so eager to assimilate all ultimate truth of science and especially philosophy that the Decrees of her General Council might well be looked upon as the most scientific textbook for the study of human thought. The three thousand five hundred words which the five hundred and forty bishops drew up on Faith and Reason, after four months' close deliberation, are probably the most important and certainly the most authoritative commentary yet issued on the movement of human thought for the last three centuries.

We have said *important,* because these men were representative as no other men could be representative. By their official position they had a tradition of culture and an experience of men without parallel. No other man has the Catholic bishop's experience of what is, and what is happening, in man. When these men from all the ends of the world came to make certain fundamental decisions on the Truth, they had their minds guided not merely by the category of Truth, but of Life. Their considered judgments were, even humanly speaking, the most important that could be vouchsafed to their fellow-men.

We have also said *authoritative;* because these men spoke with the right and the consciousness of authority. They did not vainly offer their stricken contemporaries the mere salve of opinion.

They gave them the mercy of a decision, a dogma. When they spoke something was settled; not that the war was settled, but a new fighting-line had been made.

How wholeheartedly the authoritative settlements of the Church were on the side of sound sense, may be judged from these decisions, a few of which we give:

If anyone shall deny One true God, Creator and Lord of all things visible and invisible.—Anathema Sit.

[This was a great decision that the Unity of things sprang from Intelligence, and was therefore an Intellectual Unity.]

If any shall not be ashamed to affirm that, except matter, nothing exists.—Anathema Sit.

[Sheer materialism is an insult to intellectual beings. The average man never was materialistic.]

If any shall say that the substance and essence of God and of all things is one and the same.—Anathema Sit.

[All forms of Pantheism, Materialistic and Idealistic, are intellectual imbecility.]

If anyone shall say that finite things, both corporeal and spiritual, or at least spiritual, have emanated from the divine substance; or that the divine essence by the manifestation and evolution of itself becomes all things; or lastly that God is universal or indefinite being which by determining itself constitutes the universality of things distinct according to genera, species and individuals.—Anathema Sit.

[The average man's firm conviction that he is himself and that he is neither God nor anyone else is given reinforcement.]

If anyone shall say that the One true God, our Creator and Lord, cannot be certainly known by the natural light of human reason through created things.—Anathema Sit.

[The French Revolutions sought to exalt human reason by decking a harlot in symbolic raiment and setting her for worship on the high-altar of Notre Dame (i.e. *Our Lady*). It was a bourgeois attempt to express a half-truth. But the whole truth and the real apotheosis of Reason was when the five hundred and forty bishops damned anyone who would deny that reason had such insight and far-sight as to discern God. Never in the history of the world had reason received such honour.

Moreover, in saying that reason can certainly know God through created things, Hume's youthful scepticism about causality was answered by a great negation. Effects are signs of causes; the creature leads a man's thoughts to the Creator, if only man's heart is right in its love of truth.

Lastly, when these Bishops defended with a threat of damnation, whosoever would lay murderous hands on reason and causality, they were also defending science, which is the fabric woven by reason from accepted causality. Thus the expert and the average man have debts of honour to the Council of the Vatican.]

If anyone shall say that man cannot be raised by divine power to a higher than nat-

St. Albert's College Library

ural knowledge and perfection; but can and ought by a continuous progress to arrive at length by himself at the possession of all that is true and good.—Anathema Sit.

[This is a plainspoken defence of sound sense, which insists that intelligence can communicate with intelligence; as indeed even the lowest forms of animals can communicate with their fellow animals. An infinite creative intelligence which could not consciously communicate with his intelligence would be, in algebraic form, $X - X = O$.]

If anyone shall say that miracles are impossible and therefore that all the accounts regarding them, even those contained in the Holy Scriptures, are to be dismissed as fabulous or mythical; or that miracles can never be known with certainty, and that the divine origin of Christianity is not rightly proved by them.—Anathema Sit.

[This is another plain-spoken defence of sound sense, which insists that intelligence can use external means of communicating with intelligence; as man, who may be defined as an animal who can use instruments to express his thoughts and emotions,[15] uses a pen or a harp to convey to others what he thinks and feels. So, too, infinite intelligence would be impotent if it could not use external things, of its own making, to communicate with intelligence, of its own making.

[15] No animal has invented a harp—or a pen.

We beg our readers to pay great honour to this authentic statement on miracles. It has taken close upon two thousand years to reach its present platitude-like form. But it is essentially food for thought. In its present condensed form it is well suited for those who are now engaged in the World War for Truth.]

When the Ecumenical Council of the Vatican had made these plain statements, these denials of denials, philosophy began to breathe freely. Had the doctrines which it countered by its denials prevailed there would have been an end to the craft and almost to the possibility of philosophy. But the full-voice assertion of the rights of reason to reason, and to be taught by a higher Reason, offered new life and hope to the men who were heroic enough to undertake thinking. When this assertion was officially engrossed in the annals of human thought, the men who made it were driven by war back to their homes in the four quarters of the world. Then the dogs of war were let loose upon the children of men.

Pope Leo XIII Restores Scholastic Philosophy

On August 4, 1879 philosophy once more rose to its feet for a further advance. On that day there was given to the world an Encyclical Letter beginning: *Aeterni Patris Unigenitus Filius,* and ending: *Datum Romae apud St. Petrum die 4 Augusti an.* 1879. *Pontificatus Nostri anno Secundo. Leo* P.P. XIII.

By the traditions of his See in Rome the Pope is an expert in the art of gathering crumbs into twelve baskets and rebuilding old ruins into a new city. In this letter of the greatest Pope of the nineteenth century the fabric of philosophy now in ruins was surveyed for the purpose of restoration. Or, to use perhaps a more familiar metaphor, true philosophy was commanded to give up its three centuries of trench warfare for a war of movement.

The Pope's command to advance was hardly heeded by the enemy. On the other hand it brought dismay to many of his own army of attack. Some of them thought the command premature, impolitic, dangerous, suicidal, fanatical. Some, like Mercier, hailed it as the dawn of a day's march forward into Truth.

To-day after almost fifty years we look back on the hesitations of these faint-hearts with as much perplexity of mind as was theirs when they were face to face with Pope Leo XIII's lack of hesitation. Year by year the great authentic statements of the Vatican Council and the bold forward strategy of Leo XIII have been winning victories. It is now time to find in the present strength of this movement reason for asking whether any fifty years of human thought have ever witnessed such a revival of sound philosophy. A review of the present activity of Catholic philosophy would include every group of philosophic thinkers and almost even civilised people.

Perhaps the most significant and hopeful quality

of this movement is its explicit synthesis. We are not sure that many of the contemporaries of St. Thomas had his sense of philosophical unity. But the gradual paralysis of sciences which have been severed from the unity of philosophic thought has led thinkers to see the need of what one might call the Commonwealth of Knowledge. Science is, or should be, articulated into an organic unity. To wrench a part from the whole is, in the end, to kill the part and wound the whole. Three centuries of tragic history have taught the philosophers that even for a sound ethics, as for a sound cosmology, there must be a basis of sound metaphysics. They are realising, moreover, that false psychology may grow not only to false theology but to fantastic ethics and metaphysics. Especially are they being driven to see by the problems of our modern industrial system that the most necessary, if not the highest philosophy, is an ethics that will fruit in true economics. Even the ancient and noble science of history, so largely in the keeping of ethics and psychology, is renewing its youth in the schools of this new philosophical movement. All this is heartening to those who have been depressed by the obscenities of psychoanalysis and the futility of studies on industrial fatigue.

* * * * *

In the *Phaedo* of Plato Socrates is introduced as saying: "True philosophers make it their whole business to learn to die."

Perhaps the wisdom that was Greece never uttered a wiser word. But I am writing this within sight of Easter-morn, which bids me lift up my eyes and see further than the grave. At that sight which the Hill of Mars knew not, until it was preached by a stranger from the Hill of Golgotha, my heart is lifted up to hope that a future greater than Socrates or Plato or Aristotle ever forecast will be the offspring of the wedlock between the Catholic Church and Philosophy—that is, between the divine wisdom of the Son of God and the human wisdom of the sons of men.

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